

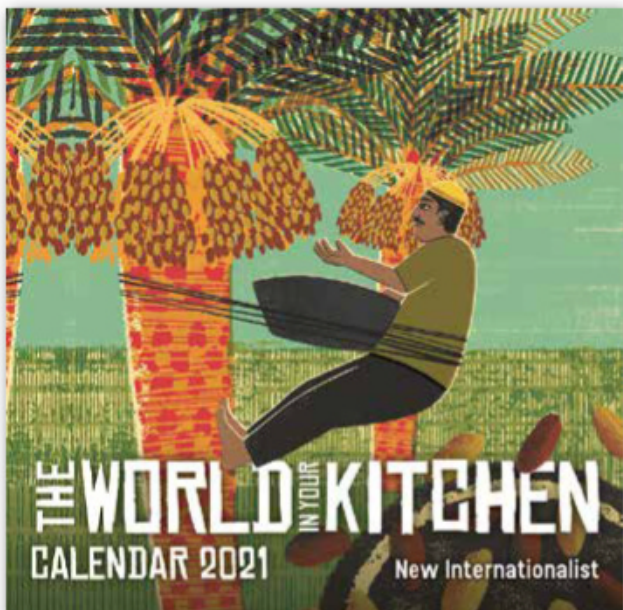
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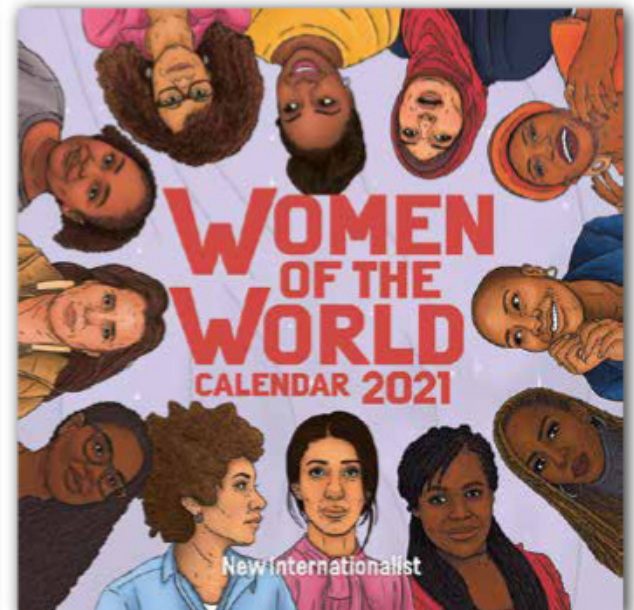
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THE PANDEMIC

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Stand-up comic
Maysoon Zayid -
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This pensive primary school student lives in the Amhara region of Ethiopia, a country that, with its high population density and number of households without running water, is especially vulnerable to the spread of Covid-19

MIKKEL OSTERGAARD/PANOS

OUT OF THE TURMOIL

When, back in March, we first discussed doing this issue on 'the world after Covid-19', there was some concern that the pandemic might have passed by the time we published. If only!

Today, as some countries see the infection rate rising in their populations for the first time, others are bracing themselves for a renewed surge. Or not. Social-media platforms like Facebook and Twitter remain abuzz with conspiracy theories – born in the US but gaining traction from Peru to Pakistan – that this is all an elaborate hoax.

Misinformation could rarely be so lethal, which makes the work of serious news media more essential than ever. Hope is also vital. In this edition's *Big Story* we not only analyse what we have learned from the pandemic, but also share positive ideas of how to create a better, fairer future out of this world in turmoil.

Elsewhere in the issue, we interview Flavia Mutamutega, Rwanda's only agony aunt for teenage girls. Meanwhile, our cartoon historian ILYA turns his attention to a history that is often ignored, that of indigenous people, in his poignant retelling of the story of the Inuit Minik Wallace's fight to have the bones of his father returned from a showcase in a New York museum.

We are excited to announce that this edition also sees the launch of *Food Justice*, our year-long reporting series – funded by the European Journalism Centre – which will explore how to up-end our food systems in favour of the least-nourished people worldwide.

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE:



Liliana Merizalde Gonzalez is a Colombian documentary photographer interested in identity, memory and territory issues generally linked to women and their strength.



Hamza Hamouchene is a London-based Algerian researcher and activist. He is the North Africa programme co-ordinator at the Transnational Institute (TNI).



Fadhel Kaboub is an associate professor of economics at Denison University and the president of the Global Institute for Sustainable Prosperity.



Tansy Hoskins is a journalist covering the textile, clothing and footwear industry. She is the author of two books – *Stitched Up* and *Foot Work – What Your Shoes Are Doing To The World*.

THE NEW INTERNATIONALIST multi-stakeholder co-operative exists to report on the issues of world poverty and inequality; to focus attention on the unjust relationship between the powerful and powerless worldwide; to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary to meet the basic needs of all; and to bring to life the people, the ideas and the action in the fight for global justice. The New Internationalist magazine was founded by Peter and Lesley Adamson in 1970. Together with a range of other publications it is published by New Internationalist Publications Ltd which is wholly owned by the New Internationalist Co-operative Ltd and its co-owners.

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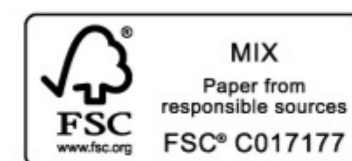
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THE BIG STORY



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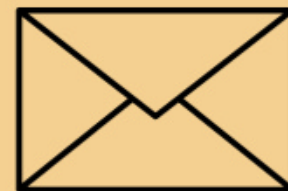
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- 13.07.20 Turkey ramps up war on Kurds in Northern Iraq**
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SEND US YOUR FEEDBACK



The New Internationalist welcomes your letters, but please note that they might be edited for space or clarity. Letters should be sent to letters@newint.org. Please remember to include a town and country for your address.

Necessary spotlight

Thank you so much for your excellent articles on the Kurds (NI 526). It is incredibly difficult to get the 'mainstream' media to take any interest in what is happening and the Australian government turns a blind eye to Erdoğan's outrages – and to the fact that the Kurds are a beacon of light in a region marked by endless bloodshed and reaction.

My own attempts to get 'respectable' publications to publish pro-Kurdish articles have been unsuccessful. I have been a Kurdish solidarity activist for some years now and have been honoured to get to know many members of the Australian Kurdish community well.

JOHN TULLY
MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

Doughnut foresight

Richard Swift's excellent 'The trouble with normal' (NI 526) said 'crises have often been the midwives of significant change'.

He prompted me to re-read the NI 523 interview with Kate Raworth, author of *Doughnut Economics*. If we had used the social foundation inner ring of her doughnut to assess each country's resilience for a global pandemic, maybe we would have foreseen many of the different Covid-19 outcomes now emerging in individual countries.

I hope the Covid-19 crisis will encourage us, as Swift put it, not 'to keep sleepwalking

into the climate catastrophe'. Using a combination of Raworth's doughnut and global campaigning might help to avoid that somnambulism. Is the time ripe for widespread doughnut commonsense?

JON ASHE SHEFFIELD, UK

Pharma horrors

Re: 'What if...drug patents were scrapped?', NI 526. If ever there were an industry that humanity demands be nationalized, it would be the pharmaceutical industry. Look at the stranglehold influence these horrors have over governments.

PHILL CHALLINOR
VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

Positive steps

I think it's a shame that Geoff Baker's letter (*Letters*, NI 526) regarding 'Young climate heroes' (NI 524) focuses on the snacks mentioned in the article rather than the hard work, passion and dedication shown by these young people as they try to save the planet. While his points may have some validity, I think we need to remember that it's impossible to live the perfect life but every positive step we take helps. These inspiring young women and men are doing a lot more than many and should be applauded, not unreasonably criticized.

ANGELA QUINN
NAMBOUR, AUSTRALIA

Why West?

I really liked Nanjala Nayabola's column 'Who are you calling "the international community"?', NI 525.

However, I would like to ask a further question. Why do we persist in using the nonsensical term 'the West'? Certain so-called 'Western values' – democracy, rationality, pluralism, egalitarianism and human rights – are arrogantly and erroneously ascribed to rich and powerful nations where they are in decline. Meanwhile, there are courageous movements in all continents, 'Western' or not, struggling to defend these values.

And where is 'the West' anyways? West of what? When a country becomes 'Westernized', does that mean that

exceptionally rapid continental drift has carried it to a new geographical location? This is a nonsensical term often used in a racist manner.

And thank you for your magazine. It is an essential source of information.

JUDITH ELLIOTT
CANTERBURY, US

Oops

The review of *A Silent Fury* by Yuri Herrera made me want to read it, especially with a 1920s story that resonates today with similar cover-ups like Grenfell Tower. But you mention the textile factories of Dakar. Surely you meant Dhaka in Bangladesh, not Dakar, capital city of Senegal?

HELEN LEE HEREFORD, UK
[Indeed, we did – Ed.]

Why I ... self-organize

I'm involved with Co-operation Town, a plan to establish a network of food co-ops on housing estates and in communities across Britain. My experience in social activism, charity development and housing co-ops has led me towards organized mutualism.

While scientists search for a vaccination, Co-operation Town is prescribing a mutual aid antidote to the UK's rising levels of food poverty, one that is independent, resilient and sustainable. Thousands of local groups have formed to address unmet community needs in the wake of the government's pandemic failings and the weak service response engendered by its austerity agenda.

Co-operation Town has developed a free food response to deliver over 22,000 meals to local, low or no-income households in Camden, London. [See page 30 or 32 – Ed.]

TREVOR O'FARRELL LONDON, UK
MUTUAL-AID.UK

To share your passion, please email letters@newint.org

GREEN MEDICINE

Yewande Omotoso's apartment is slowly being taken over by plants, much to her delight.

Johannesburg gets a bad rap for being kilometre upon kilometre of concrete. However, with some five million planted trees it is actually one of the most wooded cities in the world.

I live in the north of the city, on the third floor of a block of flats. My tiny balcony is the closest thing I have to a garden and I treasure it. I frequent the garden shop on the corner of Main and Witkoppen, not the one with the tall trees promising unbeatable discounts (I'd buy one if I thought it wouldn't collapse my balcony and upset the neighbours), but the one across with more modest plant life, the kind my apartment can accommodate. I enjoy pretending to be a wild person, gardening on my cemented balcony and occasionally waving at said neighbours as they look on bemused. Of the 15 or so plants in my apartment I have bought a few and begged a few others, a couple were gifts and others just turned up.

The bought ones were from the garden shop, where a man stepped forward and offered to help. I described my situation and he pointed me to the kinds of plants that might either survive on my north-east facing balcony – lashings of beautiful Jo'burg sun – or the ones that would be partial to indoor conditions. He also seemed to believe that I needed to buy wood chips.

'What for?'

'To protect the soil.'

I was dumbfounded. But he looked knowledgeable enough, clearly knew more than I did.

'Are you sure? What am I protecting it from?'

'The sun. This is just for the outdoor plants. 'Cause of the hot sun.'

I thought the sun was welcome? Not wanting to expose myself any further, though, I asked no more questions and allowed him to haul a sack of wood chips into my boot. Loyally I scattered them over the soil of the pot plants on the balcony. I probably needed a quarter of the amount I bought; years later the

still-full sack takes up precious space in my cupboard. I see it and think of the man at the garden shop.

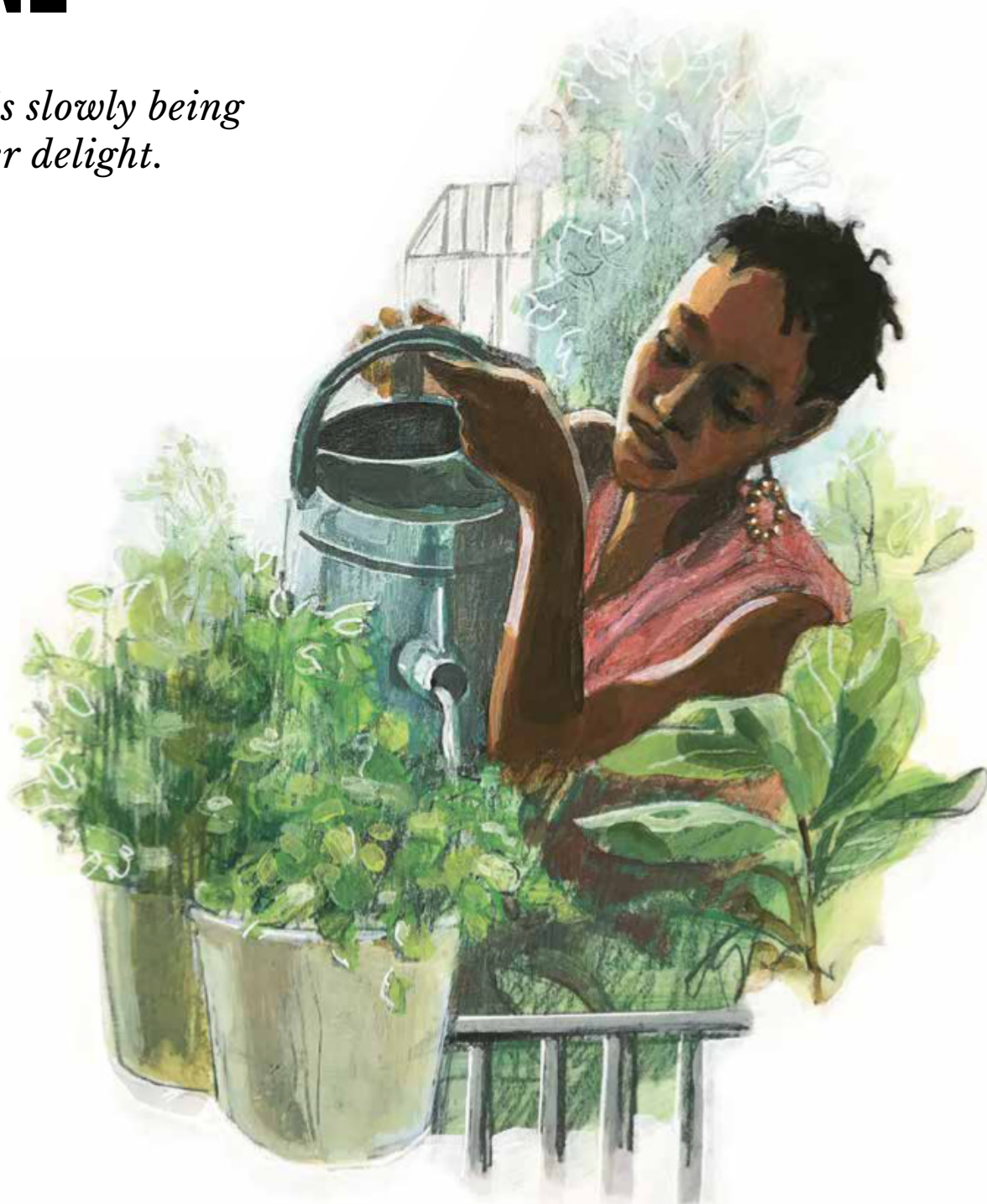
One of the plants I begged for comes from my sister-in-law, another from this sprawling garden in Jo'burg South I had the good fortune of accessing as the facilitator of a workshop being held on the premises. I would arrive early before the sessions started to sit in the garden in wonder; the instant peace reminded me of why I'd started buying plants. I bought my first only days after I'd been attacked in my home. And then pot plant after pot plant I'd sought a deep connection to something primal, however compromised by urbanity, something old and comforting. I let the caretaker of those gardens know that I absolutely had to take some cuttings home with me and he said I should feel free. I had nowhere

near a garden the size of theirs but felt if only I could take a little piece it would be enough. I walked away with two off-cuts from a Delicious Monster – one died quickly, the other took a little longer.

On a visit to Cape Town a friend gave me something known colloquially as Chicken and Egg, a plant with long slender green and white blades that replicates itself endlessly. I carried it in my lap on the plane. For years mine refused to reproduce until one day without warning there it was – hanging off a long stem, a neat miniature replica of itself.

Plant by plant I fill up my home, each time somehow restored despite the inevitable traumas of life. ●

YEWANDE OMOTOSO IS AN ARCHITECT AND NOVELIST. HER NOVELS ARE *BOMBOY* AND *THE WOMAN NEXT DOOR*.



BRITAIN

REVEALED: CHURCHES STILL BANKROLLING POLLUTERS

Regional church bodies still have millions invested in fossil fuels, despite the Church of England's pledge to start divesting this year from oil and gas, a new investigation by DeSmog, co-published with *New Internationalist*, has uncovered.

Analysis of annual reports, along with data provided by churches, revealed that the Church of England's 42 dioceses – groups of churches which directly control their own investments – have an estimated \$23.3 million tied up in companies like Shell, BP and Total.

The dioceses invest in funds such as the 'Chari-fund' managed by M&G, and through managers such as Rathbone and Cazenove, which all continue to hold shares in fossil-fuel firms.

The most popular invest-

ment vehicle is through charity fund manager CCLA, and its Church of England CBF funds, which have a total value of \$3.3 billion – and no ethical stance against investing in fossil-fuel companies.

Oxford diocese has the highest estimated investment in fossil fuels, with \$3.7 million invested in BP and Shell, the analysis shows. London, Chichester and Southwark dioceses are each estimated to have over \$2.6 million invested in fossil fuels. A further 22 dioceses also have smaller investments in oil and gas companies.

Reverend Dr Darrell Hannah, Rector for All Saints Church in Ascot, a parish church in the Diocese of Oxford, described the fossil-fuel investments as 'shocking'.

Several UK Churches have already divested from fossil

fuels, including Quakers in Britain, the Church of Ireland, the United Reformed Church and some Catholic dioceses.

In 2018, the Church of England's General Synod voted to divest from all oil and gas companies that are not on track to meet the Paris Agreement targets by 2023, with divestment starting in 2020. Christian charity Operation Noah has calculated that the national church body holds \$154-million worth of shares in polluting fossil-fuel firms.

The Church has defended its investments on the basis that it can use its shareholder weight to influence oil companies to do better. Holly-Anna Petersen, an activist at Christian Climate Action, thinks otherwise. 'The stance of engagement continues to make no impact on corporate

BORDERLINES

Refugees for refugees

As Covid-19 spreads inexorably throughout the world, refugee-led organizations are key to keeping their communities safe, new research has revealed.

There are huge risks in overcrowded camps where the traditional sources of support – UN agencies, international NGOs and governments – are constrained by new regulations. The 80 per cent of refugees who subsist in cities are no less exposed; denied government support and reliant on poorly paid, ad hoc work, which has evaporated during lockdown.

Papers published in June's Forced Migration Review detail how refugee-led organizations have moved to fill the gap. In Lebanon, local groups are delivering food baskets, hygiene kits and cash support to tens of thousands of families.

In Kenya's vast Dadaab refugee complex, Dadaab Films has expanded its programming to include public-health information on preventing the spread of Covid-19.

In Australia, the Asia Pacific Network of Refugees has produced educational materials in Farsi, Dari and other languages while running a public campaign for recognition for the 'refugee nurses, doctors and psychologists' who are serving the public.

To have a hope of protecting displaced peoples through the pandemic, says the Global Refugee-led Network, refugees can no longer be cast as 'passive recipients' of international aid and refugee-led groups must be recognized and funded directly as equal partners.

noin.tl/FMRCovid19reflections

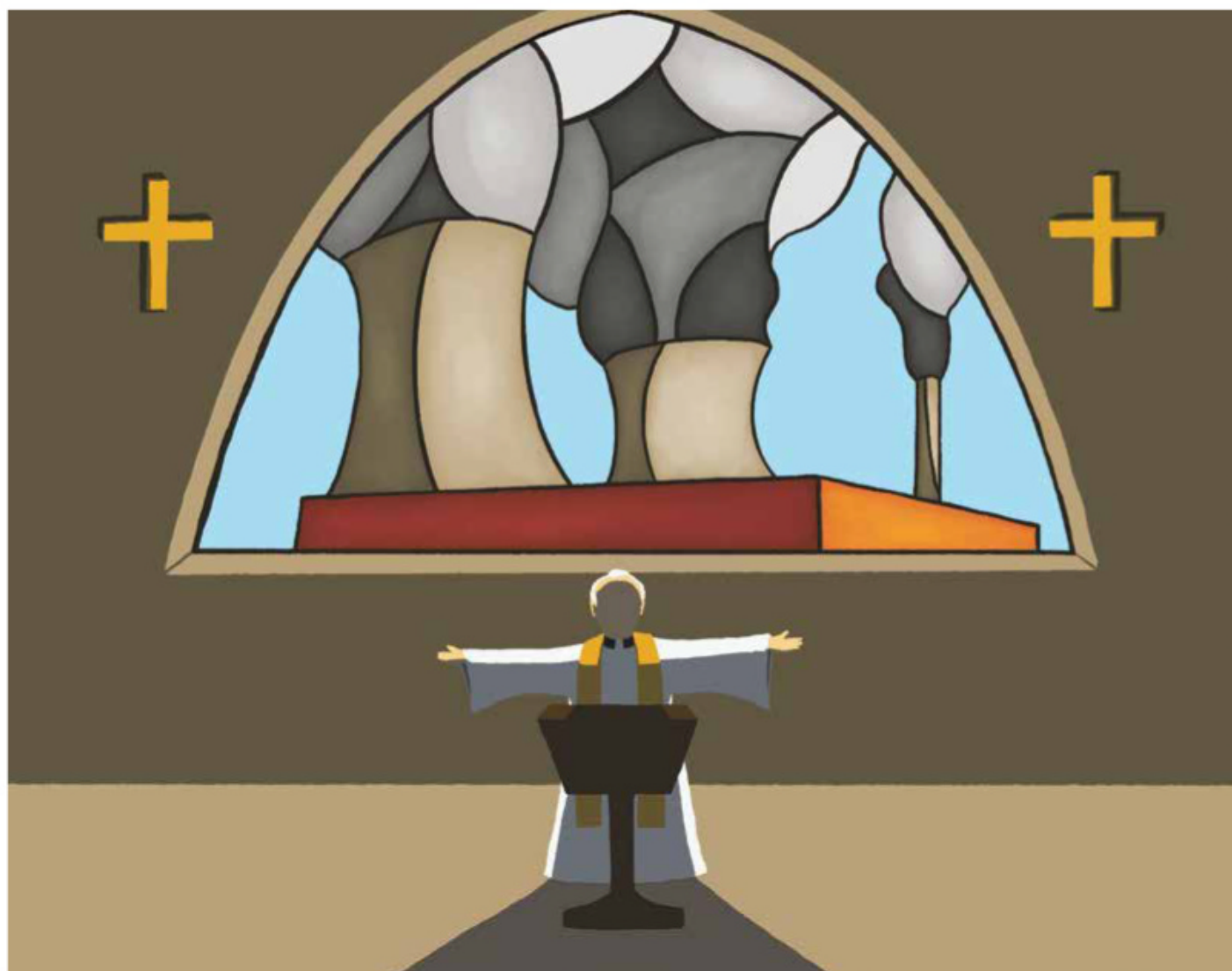


ILLUSTRATION: ANDY CARTER

practices,' she says, 'whereas fossil-fuel companies' own reports have outlined that divestment is a threat to their future prospects.

'As Christians we need to ask ourselves, if we care about our children and our brothers and sisters around the world, why are we giving moral licence to those destroying their lives?'

Many dioceses are already choosing to reduce their investments in fossil fuels and increase their investments in renewable energy. But Kat Kramer, Christian Aid's Global Climate Lead, feels the 2023 divestment deadline is too far into the future.

'It is sad to see the Church of England continuing to profit directly from the climate crisis,' she says. 'Church investors will not be able to claim to be on the right side of history if they just follow the crowd. By dragging their feet, they are wasting a unique opportunity.'

FRANCES RANKIN

For more on this story, visit nin.tl/ChurchBigOil

INTRODUCING... LAZARUS CHAKWERA



When he topped the polls in Malawi's Presidential election in June, 65-year-old Lazarus Chakwera broke through a number of African barriers. It is infrequent enough to see a peaceful transition to power from an opposition leader, but what is surely a first in post-colonial African politics is that Chakwera gained the Presidency after a Constitutional Court (reaffirmed on appeal by the Supreme Court) overturned the results of a controversial vote in May that had been 'won' by the incumbent Peter Mutharika. This election was widely regarded to be fraudulent and it was the second time the corrupt Mutharika regime had been installed by a lapdog electoral commission that ignored the constitutional provision that the President required at least 50 per cent of the popular vote. This time Malawians had had enough and launched a campaign of relentless pressure on the streets and in the media to ensure the judiciary and security forces guaranteed their rights.

Chakwera and his Malawian Congress Party made common cause with Malawian economist Saulos Chilima (now Vice-President), running for election together as the Tonse Alliance to ensure the opposition vote was not split as in 2019. Tonse means 'everyone together' and their support, amounting to nearly 60 per cent of the vote, came from all sections of the country.

As a theologian and former head of the Malawian Assemblies of God, Chakwera employed the powerful cadence of a preacher in his remarkable acceptance speech, in which he called for an end to tribal nepotism and corruption. He promised a new era of openness

with trimmed presidential powers, greater transparency and replacing the kleptocracy that has plagued Malawi since the 30-year dictatorship of the brutal Hastings Banda, propped up by apartheid South Africa.

Welcome words to Malawian ears. Yet such words have been uttered before, and the hurdles Chakwera faces are huge. Corruption has been an institutional part of the economy and political life since 'President-for Life' Hastings Banda turned it into state policy. It will take an enormous commitment to overturn it, and citizens don't yet have a model for how a society without extensive abuse of power by those in government should function.

Dating back to the Banda dictatorship, which ended in 1994, Malawian society has been dominated by people from the Chewa ethnic group from the centre and south of the country. This makes the Tonse appeal of 'all Malawians together' even more remarkable. That said, while the Chakwera team may bring a commitment to fairness in government, they may not have the radical vision for social justice necessary to bring forth transformation in one of Africa's poorest countries.

Chakwera, with Christian fundamentalist roots, is also unlikely to encourage an enlightened approach to LGBT and gender issues. Hope lies with the fact that his victory was propelled from below and that Malawians will continue to ensure that their leaders will be held to account. This small landlocked southern African country could provide inspiration beyond its borders to a continent badly served by its political class.

RICHARD SWIFT

SERIOUSLY?

Consumerism and social protest have always been an awkward fit, yet recent history is replete with brands sidling up to important causes to skilfully market their products to the public.

From the ridiculed Pepsi advert starring reality television star Kendall Jenner using the soft drink as a bizarre de-escalation tool at protests, to boutique online jewellers charging up to \$100 for 'symbolic' safety pins against racism, there have been countless attempts to market the revolution.

In an even stranger turn of events, in June, a white businessman applied to trademark the phrases 'Black Lives Matter' and 'I can't breathe' in the UK, meaning that if people were to use the wording in any venture, they would be obliged to pay him royalties. Following an online campaign, he caved to public pressure and withdrew the application on public interest grounds.

This is not the first time trademarks have been used to profit from marginalized people. In Australia, a company called WAM Clothing, which is not owned by Indigenous people, has exclusive rights to use the Aboriginal flag on its merchandise. It has even issued infringement notices to Aboriginal-owned companies such as the social enterprise Spark Health. To add salt to the wound, WAM Clothing's partial owner was also prosecuted in 2019 by Australia's competition authority for selling fake Aboriginal art.

UGANDA WHAT'S IN A NAME

The highest mountain in Uganda is named after Henry Morton Stanley, a notorious imperialist. The country's biggest lake is known to English speakers as Victoria, after the monarch of the largest empire the world has ever known. In Kampala, the capital, there are roads named after Lord Lugard, who massacred hundreds of Ugandans on Bulingugwe island in 1892, and Henry Colville, who launched a murderous war on the pre-colonial kingdom of Bunyoro.

In June, as statues of racists were being pulled down around the world, over 5,000 Ugandans petitioned their government to demand that landmarks be renamed. 'It didn't start with George Floyd, but from a deeper need to understand the historical relations between colonized and colonizer, and the legacy of that relationship in modern times,' says Apollo Makubuya, the lawyer who organized the campaign.

By mid-July the petition had been sent to the prime minister and was awaiting a response. One question is what do with streets commemorating Ugandans who collaborated with the imperial regime (change them too, says Makubuya). Another is which new names should replace the old ones. For example, there are several African names for Lake Victoria, which spans three countries. Last year a motion to rename the lake was rejected by the East African Legislative Assembly, a regional parliament.

Critics scoff that renaming is mere symbolism. But the wider push for decolonization extends to law, education and politics. 'In Uganda the "post-colonial" leadership has been very colonial,' says Bwesigye

bwa Mwesigire, a writer and activist. 'It has been very violent and it has been against the people.' The strongman president, Yoweri Museveni, has ruled for 34 years with military assistance from the West. His own name is derived from the 'Seventh' Battalion of the King's African Rifles, a British regiment in which many Ugandans fought. The colonial legacy runs deep.

LIAM TAYLOR

INEQUALITY WATCH

BLACK BOYS IN THE US
ARE

250%

MORE LIKELY TO DIE
AS A RESULT OF
POLICE VIOLENCE
OVER THE COURSE
OF THEIR LIVES THAN
THEIR WHITE PEERS

Source: Proceedings of the
National Academy of Sciences

ECUADOR HEAVYWEIGHT BATTLE

In a defining moment for the Amazon and other forests, the Constitutional Court of Ecuador has agreed to hear the case of the threatened Los Cedros Protected Forest and potentially set a worldwide precedent for the protection of the environment.

In 2008, Ecuador was the first country to enshrine the rights of nature into its constitution, providing legal recognition for nearly 2.5 million hectares of protected forests. Although there have been previous attempts to enforce this, this case is a battle of the heavyweights: the Constitutional Court taking on the government, in the guise of state-registered mining company ENAMI.

The Los Cedros forest is one of the most biologically diverse habitats in the world and home to over 200 species with high extinction risk.

Canadian mining company Cornerstone Capital Resources had its permit for exploration in the forest, in collaboration with ENAMI, stripped in June 2019. The Constitutional Court will hear the government's appeal on behalf of ENAMI later this year.

JAN GOODEY



SIGN OF THE TIMES

Protesting in Rome, Italy, against Israel's annexation of Palestinian territories.



BRITAIN NATIONAL DISGRACE

Many Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in Britain have been left without basic services, including water, during the Covid-19 pandemic. Some have been evicted, despite safety warnings from charities.

Travelling people were not accounted for in government provisions that were meant to ensure safe housing for those in need throughout the pandemic shutdown, including an 'eviction ban' for tenants



and mortgage holidays for home owners. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) populations already have the worst health outcomes and lowest life expectancy of all ethnic groups in the UK, meaning they're among the most likely to be impacted by coronavirus.

Abbie Kirkby, Advice and Policy Manager at advocacy group Friends Families and Travellers (FFT), says that they requested in March that the government draw up a clear plan on how nearly 100,000 nomadic people could self-isolate on unauthorized encampments, Traveller sites

and boats. While both Wales and Scotland brought in protections, the Westminster government stayed mostly silent on the topic and roadside camps have continued to be moved on. There is already a chronic shortage of designated sites and Covid-19 has made the situation more difficult.

'It really is quite beyond belief that even during a global pandemic Gypsies and Travellers continue to be evicted,' Kirkby says.

FFT, which provided its own advice for GRT families needing to shield and self-isolate, asked the government

to tell local councils to halt evictions during the Covid-19 shutdown and to provide water, sanitation and refuse collection for families needing to shield due to health conditions.

Kirkby says many families aren't able to protect themselves during the pandemic. 'Some local authorities have risen to the task and supported Gypsies and Travellers, whilst others have left families without the very basic amenities such as water and sanitation – an absolute disgrace in 21st-century Britain.'

HANNAH VICKERS

Down time at the Stow-on-the-Wold horse fair in the UK. Many Gypsies, Roma and Travellers have been left without basic services during the Covid-19 pandemic.

ADRIAN SHERRATT / ALAMY



AUSTRALIA KIDS LOCKED UP

At 10 years of age, children should be developing in a nurturing environment of freedom and safety. But in Australia, 600 children between the ages of 10 and 13 were imprisoned in 2019 – over 60 per cent of them Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

It was hoped the Council of Attorneys-General would raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 14 years old in July, but instead they said more work was needed on alternatives for children ‘who exhibit offending behaviour’.

Children can be incarcerated for things like burglary, stealing cars or breaking a curfew and then get stuck in the system, explains Amnesty Australia’s Indigenous Rights Advisor, Rodney Dillon. ‘Once they get into detention it’s

like a one-way ticket. If you’ve got a 10-year-old kid in the prison system you know where they’re going to be when they’re 20.’

Solitary confinement and routine strip searching have been recorded in Australia’s youth detention centres and children can be locked up thousands of kilometres from their loved ones.

Campaigners want more community-based services to address problems that might result in criminal convictions, including mental-health issues, learning disabilities and abuse.

Dillon would like more funding to expand Indigenous-led diversionary programmes, including taking children to their home lands. ‘We know they work,’ he says. ‘Elders show the kids what the land means to them. They’ve got ancestors buried in this land, they’ve got a responsibility to their families, they’ve got a responsibility to the land.’

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up around three per cent of Australia’s general population, but constitute over a quarter of the country’s prisoners. Since 1991 there have been over 430 Indigenous deaths in custody.

‘Locking people up doesn’t work,’ says Dillon. ‘We need to start thinking about how to keep kids out of prison, rather than making an industry of keeping them in it.’

AMY HALL

OPEN WINDOW

Police violence by
Thiago Lucas (Brazil)



CHINA UIGHUR WOMEN STERILIZED

Hundreds of thousands of women in the Muslim majority province of Xinjiang are thought to have been subjected to regular pregnancy checks, coercive birth control and abortion procedures by the Chinese authorities, an investigation by Associated Press (AP) has found.

State documents show that in 2014, just over 200,000 contraceptive coils (IUDs) were inserted in the region. By 2018, this number had increased by 60 per cent. However, IUD use declined elsewhere in China. In contrast, according to the state news outlet The Paper, in Han-majority districts of Xinjiang Han Chinese births are encouraged with milk powder and hospital birth subsidies.

Data obtained by AP also shows that of the 484 're-education' camp detainees listed in Karakax county, 149 were there for 'having too many children' and failing to pay hefty fines on 'illegal births'.

Seven former detainees confirmed with AP that they were force-fed unknown pills and administered injections. Following medical check-ups after leaving China they found that they were sterile.

One such person is Gulnar Omirzakh, a Chinese-born Kazakh, who was forcibly inserted with an IUD at a detention centre. Since fleeing to Kazakhstan, Gulnar has experienced health complications as a result of the procedure. The IUD embedded into her womb causes inflammation and severe pain, which she said felt 'like being stabbed with a knife'.

'People there are now terrified of giving birth,' she told AP. 'When I think of the word "Xinjiang", I can still feel that fear,' she added.

Population control is just one tenet of the government's campaign against separatist feeling, according to anthropologist Darren Byler. Speaking to AP, former detainees said they were taught 'excessive births lead to extremism and poverty'.

'A lot of the sentiments – terrorism, extremism, separatism, as the Chinese state refers to them – are a misrecognition of what Uighurs actually believe,' Byler told *New Internationalist* in 2019. 'Mostly, Uighurs want to have freedom to make choices themselves as people, a better life for their families... Most people that I know don't necessarily want independence in a strong sense. They're not organizing in an insurgency.'

Birth rates across Xinjiang plunged by 24 per cent in 2019 alone, compared to just 4.2 per cent across Greater China.

There has been an expansion of systems to reward those who report illegal births, as well as to detain doctors and medical students found to be helping Uighurs 'dodge the system and give birth at home', AP found.

Around 20 to 25 per cent of China's oil comes from this resource-rich region and Xinjiang is a major trade route of its flagship Belt and Road initiative. Activists are concerned that the humanitarian crisis is being weaponized to lay the legal foundations for war. In June, Donald Trump passed sanctions on Chinese officials over human rights abuses in Xinjiang.

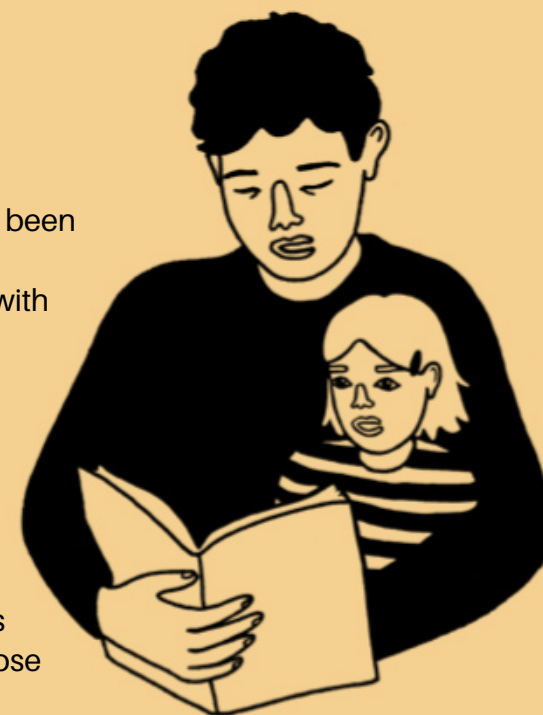
Journalist Ben Mauk, who has conducted extensive interviews with former camp detainees, tweeted that while there was 'overwhelming' evidence for the mass incarceration of ethnic minorities, the fact 'that the US terrorizes Muslim communities across the globe makes their stated interest in religious freedom in Xinjiang hard to swallow.'

HUSNA RIZVI

REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL

PRACTICAL PARENTING

Dads in Canada have been feeling the benefit of spending more time with their kids during the Covid-19 shutdown. A survey carried out by the Canadian Men's Health Foundation asked fathers about the impact of coronavirus and 40 per cent of those responding said that the pandemic has had a positive effect on their role as a parent, while 60 per cent felt closer to their children. Perhaps most importantly, half of the fathers asked said they would be more engaged as a parent in the future.



HANDS-FREE WASHING

Covid-19 lockdowns have inspired innovative thinking around the world and brothers Richard Kwarteng and Jude Osei in Kumasi, Ghana, are no exceptions. It reportedly took just five days for Kwarteng, who is a shoemaker, to turn an old recycled metal barrel into a solar-powered, hands-free basin, working on a 25-second timer, to encourage handwashing in their local neighbourhood.

Osei recorded a video of Kwarteng demonstrating how to use the device and it went viral on social media, leading to a call from Ghanaian government workers to ask if more machines could be constructed for use across the country.

AMY HALL

MUNICIPAL CLEAN-UP

Sydney's business district will now be powered by renewable energy, after the local government began sourcing all of its energy from solar and wind farms in New South Wales. The City runs 115 buildings, 75 parks, 5 pools and 23,000 street lights.

The energy deal will reportedly save the City of Sydney A\$500,000 (US\$357,277) every year and slash its carbon-dioxide emissions by nearly one third before 2024.

CAPITAL AT RISK. INVESTMENTS ARE LONG TERM AND MAY NOT BE READILY REALISABLE.
ABUNDANCE IS AUTHORISED AND REGULATED BY THE FINANCIAL CONDUCT AUTHORITY (525432).

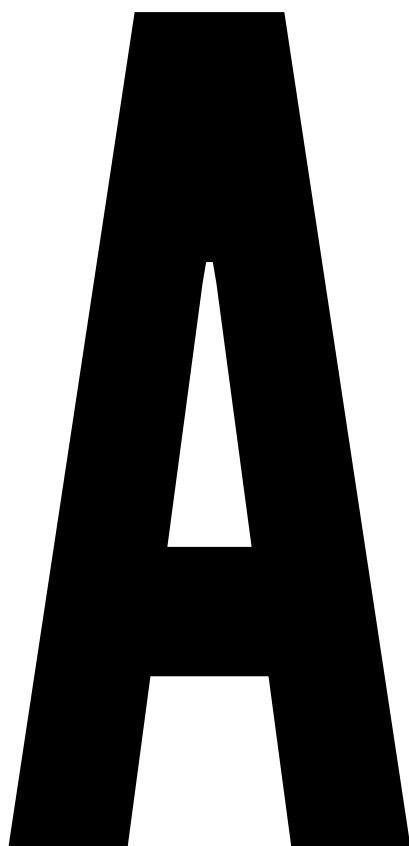
Making money is great.
But only if you've got a
planet left to spend it on.



THE BIG STORY
COVID-19

LESSONS FROM THE PANDEMIC

*How can we transform the calamity that has befallen us and
create healing? Vanessa Baird on the change we can be.*



Covid-19 is unequal in terms of who gets ill, who dies and who can survive the policy responses to it

As Covid-19 continues to wreak havoc across the world, it seems crass and insensitive to speak of any good that can come out of this pandemic.

For those who have died or lost loved ones or been left with lasting ill health, there is likely no good.

All of us have had to learn to be afraid – of the virus, of each other and of ourselves. Of the new and dreadful capacity of our own bodies to cause death to those we come into contact with.

Like the anguished ambulance driver in Iraq who told a BBC World Service reporter that he had unwittingly infected and ‘killed’ three members of his immediate family.

This collective trauma has cracked open reality and changed it. The world pre-Covid and post-Covid will not be the same, whatever your measure: emotional, medical, economic, social, political.

Across the world lives and livelihoods continue to be lost and the scale of the global catastrophe is only beginning to unfold. Aid agencies are warning that the number of people facing acute hunger could double to a quarter of a billion in 2020 because of the multiple impacts. Economists talk of the largest economic shock in decades and a contraction of global GDP of between 5.2 and 8 per cent.¹

And we do not know how long this will go on. But we know from history that great ructions – the Black Death, the two World Wars, for example – can catalyse great transformation. The choices we make now and in the near future have the potential to change the world for the better or make it worse. What we do next will determine whether we create a healthier, more sustainable, more equitable world or sink further into the mire.

We cannot sit back and wait for change to happen, hoping for the best. We can be sure that those with power and privilege are busy devising ways of maximizing their advantage – be they corporations, speculators, or political operators who have sniffed the authoritarian elixir of new powers and corrupt deals under the cover of Covid-19.

The disease of inequality

‘We are all in this together,’ they say, and in a simple way it’s true. We are all affected, but differently. ‘Covid is not an equal opportunities virus,’ as Nobel economist Joseph Stiglitz puts it. It’s unequal

in terms of who gets ill, who dies and who can survive the policy responses to it.

This pandemic has exposed existing inequalities – some of them hitherto hidden – and created new ones. At first it seemed older people were most at risk. Then those with pre-existing health conditions or ‘co-morbidities’. Then front-line service workers. Then, in the UK and US at least, we noticed that people from ethnic minorities featured disproportionately in the death tolls. Each day brought new evidence of how social and economic disadvantage was affecting who should live and who should die. How were people living in crowded or multi-generational households to protect themselves by socially distancing; how could the millions on this planet who still lack sanitation follow the ‘wash your hands often’ rule? Low-income workers in the informal, gig or service economies could not work from home. Home-schooling does not work for children from poor households without digital access.

As the disease spread, the pattern of disadvantage could be seen across the world – with local characteristics. In India, when Narendra Modi ordered a lockdown with just a few hours’ warning, 80 million migrant workers lost their jobs overnight. Their only option was to walk back to their villages, often hundreds of miles away. There were reports of hungry children eating grass en route. Millions of migrant workers around the world remain stranded, some at sea, unable to work or send back the remittances on which their families rely. In the Amazon, where incursions by loggers and miners are intensifying, indigenous people are especially vulnerable to the virus.

Gender has a part to play, too. In Italy men were almost twice as likely to die as women, but not so in India where more women are losing their lives.²

Previous page: All masked up and ready to stay safe, a Havana resident walks by a vehicle of Covid-19 health workers. Foresight, planning and a strong public-health system have saved Cuba from the worst of the pandemic.

ERNESTO MASTRASCUSA/EFE/ALAMY

Opposite page: In Kibera, Nairobi, Martha Apisa and Stacy Ayuma use their braids to raise awareness of the virus by imitating its shape. Community health efforts are intense as social distancing is impossible and sanitation poor in Kenya’s largest slum.

DONWILSON ODHIAMBO/SOPA/ZUMA/ALAMY



According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), worldwide women are feeling the social and economic impacts more keenly.

Meanwhile, Jeff Bezos, owner of Amazon and the world's first trillionaire, has seen his fortune swell by \$24 billion during the pandemic.

António Guterres, the United Nations Secretary-General, pithily observed in a tweet: 'Covid-19 has exposed the lie that free markets can deliver healthcare for all, the fiction that unpaid care work isn't work, the delusion that we live in a post-racist world. We are all floating on the same sea, but some are in super-yachts and others clinging to drifting debris.'

Covid-19 has provided a powerful lens through which inequality, in its many forms, can be seen. What's equally obvious is that we cannot beat this virus if we do not also tackle the disease of inequality.

The global economic system is key and in the next few months millions of lives and livelihoods will depend on the

success of campaigns to cancel the debts of the poorest countries, a concerted action on tax avoidance and how the International Monetary Fund chooses to use its resources.

Care matters

For many years, in countries following neoliberal policies, public health has been underfunded and most care work poorly paid or not at all. Then, suddenly, Covid-19 came and carers, health workers, cleaners and refuse collectors were re-classified as 'key' or 'essential workers'. Far more important than bankers and lawyers. Politicians who had backed austerity cuts on public services, while bailing out the banks, and championed privatization were suddenly full of praise for 'our carers'.

The rich Italian state of Lombardy, overwhelmed by a surge of infection in March, had the most privatized health system in the country – and its private hospitals turned away sick and dying patients. Calls for support to other wealthy

European neighbours fell on deaf ears. Help did come – from communist Cuba, which sent aid in the form of doctors and nurses. There is a campaign to nominate them for the Nobel Peace Prize.

If carers are more essential than bankers, why not reflect this in their pay packets?

The market is not wise and globalization does not deliver

The virus that first appeared in Wuhan, China, spread rapidly around the world thanks to economic globalization and frequent flying. But that same globalization failed to produce the essential items people needed to combat it. The shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) and testing kits took weeks to resolve. The famous 'just in time' supply chains of globalization turned out to be fragile, corruption ridden and creakingly slow. In the US, free-market competition between federal states ratcheted up the price of vital items. The fragility of globalization's supply lines was further exposed

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when clothing outlets in the West cancelled orders at the last minute, throwing under the bus producers in countries like Bangladesh (see page 36). Those who have spent years arguing for greater self-sufficiency in the Global South and reduced reliance on export markets are vindicated.

The big state

In several countries the state intervened in the market on an unprecedented scale. As shut-down businesses laid off staff, a collapsing private sector was threatening to trigger major social unrest. Even vehemently neoliberal governments, like those of Chile and the UK, conjured up schemes to support workers' pay to avoid a tsunami of unemployment. In Argentina direct payments were made to one fifth of the population, including informal workers. Social and welfare payments were ramped up, even in the US. Water supplies in South Africa were taken back under state control. In England street homelessness was ended virtually overnight, with councils offering 90 per cent of rough sleepers accommodation in vacant hotel rooms.

All this intervention will cost billions to the public purse. In return the private

sector should be required, at least, to cap fat-cat executive pay, clamp down on tax evasion and move faster to become fossil-fuel free. Those \$32 trillion currently squirrelled away in illegal tax havens can be put to better use.

Meanwhile the expansion of social-welfare payments to avoid mass destitution has brought the idealistic notion of a Universal Basic Income closer to being a realistic proposition.

Focus on food

In rich countries shops did not run out of food as initially feared and mutual aid groups, local councils and charities got essentials to many vulnerable and isolated individuals. In the Global South the situation is far more precarious, with growing numbers facing acute shortage. Oxfam warns that by the end of the year pandemic-related hunger could be killing 12,000 people a day, more than the virus's death rate of 10,000 a day in April 2020.³

Yemen, Venezuela, Brazil, India, Syria, South Sudan and South Africa are especially at risk. The loss of remittances income is a major cause of growing poverty and food insecurity as well as ongoing conflict. In remittance-reliant

countries like the Philippines, the pandemic has drawn attention to the need to build local resilience, including food sovereignty. (See page 29.)

Reset our relationship with nature

Under lockdown many of us mused that we felt closer to nature. If you shut down the machine noise of anthropocentric domination you can hear the birds singing. Wildlife becomes more assertive and evident. Deer appear in city streets; fish in the hitherto toxic canals of Venice. Skies are unusually blue; the air is clean. Home-working means less commuting, less traffic, fewer fumes. More people walk and cycle. You can breathe freely in the heart of the world's most toxic cities.

This, maybe short-lived, upside of lockdown gave us a taste of a fossil-free future and it was sweet. It offered a break from addictive consumerism. In the words of George Monbiot: 'This

Young Rio favela residents, part of the grassroots Marcha das Favelas group, organize mutual aid to make up for the absence of the Brazilian state in tackling the crisis.

ELLAN LUSTOSA/ZUMA/ALAMY



If governments and the big multilateral institutions have been tardy and wanting in their responses to the crisis, the opposite can be said of civil society

horrendous pandemic has to be a tipping point. This has to be a point of transformation where we move from one system, an exploitative political and economic system, to a completely different one: private sufficiency and public luxury.⁴

But the global Green New Deal that is now firmly back on the media agenda will need to have justice built into it. (See page 24.)

Put people first

Covid-19 put governments to the test – and some failed dismally. ‘Ostrich leaders’ like Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro were the worst. In denying or lying about the dangers posed, they failed to act upon clear urgent medical advice coming from the World Health Organization (WHO). They betrayed the basic trust that has to exist between elected rulers and the ruled, that the former will not kill the latter. Their outrageous, often ludicrous, blunders have been widely reported, and do not need repeating here. The result is written in blood: the highest death tolls in the world, at the time of writing, are in the US and Brazil.⁵

So, let’s focus on the countries that have quietly, intelligently, got on with protecting their citizens. Of the 12 most successful countries, seven – Aotearoa/New Zealand, Germany, Taiwan, Iceland, Finland, Norway, Denmark – are led by women. The new generation of women leaders are, one explanation goes, more likely to listen to experts. They do not waste time. Taiwan moved so fast and in such a technologically savvy way, it contained the spread without needing to put the country into lockdown. President Tsai Ing-wen and her digital minister (former hacker) Audrey Tang, helped by an epidemiologist for vice-president, made quite a team.

Greece is not led by a woman, but the government of Kyriakos Mitsotakis recognized that years of austerity had so hollowed out the public-health service,

it would be swiftly overwhelmed if the virus was allowed to get a hold. There was no flirting with ideas of ‘herd immunity’ or ‘behavioural fatigue’. Led by epidemiology rather than ideology, a conservative leadership managed to keep the country’s death toll in the low hundreds, while in Italy and Spain it hit tens of thousands.

Communist Cuba showed the value of planning and forethought. Weeks before the first case was detected on the island, doctors were sent for specialist WHO training and visited China to study how to fight the disease. In June, president Miguel Díaz-Canal was able to present a 122-page plan (yes, Boris, a plan!) for relaxing quarantine measures. In all, Cuba sent 30 medical brigades to help fight the pandemic in 28 countries and kept its own deaths down to 87. Not one of them was a health worker.⁶

Vietnam is perhaps the most remarkable case, with 10 deaths in a population of 97 million and close trade ties to China. Researcher Jenny Nguyen puts it down to a very fast lockdown (‘draconian’ in the words of the foreign media), previous experience of the SARS and MERS epidemics (like Taiwan and Singapore), and a big public buy-in with mobilization across society from the military to grassroots organizations. Most crucial though was that ‘the government was willing to put health over the economy from the beginning,’ says Nguyen.⁷

That is something that all who have handled the emergency well share, whatever their political stripe. They put people first.

Where is the UN?

The virus respects no borders; this pandemic clearly requires a co-ordinated international response. At the forefront of this has been the WHO, the target of Trumpian accusations that it, not the US administration, is to blame for the deaths of US citizens from coronavirus. Trump’s war with the WHO, and its

Ethiopian chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, is irrational and complex, connected with his trade war with China, and his hostility towards the entire multilateral system. The president’s decision to withdraw US funding has been likened to cutting off a firehose during a massive blaze. An investigation into the WHO’s handling of the pandemic is due to report next year.

A far more culpable body of the system is the 15-member Security Council, the most powerful arm of the UN and the most useless, paralysed by intractable conflict on almost all issues between its five permanent members: the US, Russia, China, France and the UK.

‘It’s hard to recall a more lamentable response to a global emergency,’ fumed Richard Horton, editor of *The Lancet*, as the world hit the milestone of 10 million cases and 500,000 deaths from Covid-19 in early July.⁸

The UN’s humanitarian agencies continue their efforts, notwithstanding. In mid-July a major co-ordinated funding appeal was launched to aid 63 of the poorest, most-at-risk countries. Part of the Covid-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, the appeal is the largest in the UN’s history. By the end of July, however, only \$1.64 billion of the \$10.3 billion required had been received.

The grassroots are singing

If governments and the big multilateral institutions have been tardy and wanting in their responses to the crisis, the opposite can be said of non-state actors, of civil society.

Ordinary citizens and their social movements have been agile, swift – and effective.

In mid-March, as lockdown loomed in the UK, more than 200 mutual aid groups sprang up within hours. Set up online, volunteers co-ordinated via WhatsApp and Facebook groups, offering help to people in self-isolation with

THE BIG STORY

shopping, dog walking and picking up prescriptions. By June there were 4,225 groups in both urban and rural areas.

The solidarity has been international too. Sophie King, who works with the grassroots poverty action group GM Savers in Manchester, UK, describes how their network not only mobilized locally but raised funds for organizations in Africa which were part of the Slum/Shack Dwellers International Network.

Across the world, citizens have leapt into action. Thousands of roadside food kitchens sprang up in India.

In Brazil, citizens' movements have stepped in to fill the void left by a murderously negligent government (see *View from Brazil*, page 55).

The grassroots group G10 Favelas is active in the 100,000-strong neighbourhood of Paraisópolis, in southern São Paulo. Volunteer leaders, each responsible for 50 houses, distribute food baskets and information on the importance of social isolation. Infected people are monitored. Four ambulances have been sourced and two vans for distributing food and cleaning products. A crowdfunding campaign was started to fund two houses for hosting infected people who cannot isolate at home, the 510 beds all complying with recommended social isolation guidelines, report Renata Boulos and Patricia Laczynski.⁹

Also in Brazil, the Homeless Workers Movement (MTST) has mobilized across the country to create mutual aid brigades. By late June they had delivered 150 tons of food, 15,000 sanitizers and cleaning kits and 49,830 masks, benefiting 18,500 families. They also provide health guidance (via Whatsapp) and psychological, social and legal information and protection to families facing eviction.

There have been similar initiatives in many African countries that are part of the Slum/Shack Dwellers International Network, led by women, often with lasting benefits apart from saving lives. In Francistown, Botswana, volunteers went door to door to identify houses without running water and toilets and helped them to install facilities.

Rethinking democracies

Restriction. Curfews. Social isolation. More power for the state. Less accountability.

This is a bad time for democracy, especially for politics that is made on the streets, in communities, in the shared workplace.

In the Philippines, President Rodrigo Duterte has used the crisis to imprison more of his political opponents; the same is happening to artists and journalists in Bangladesh. In Bolivia the coup administration of Jeanine Áñez Chávez is using the pandemic to defer promised elections.

And yet... Under the most unpropitious of circumstances we have also seen an eruption of political activism, most visibly in the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests that have kicked off across a world in lockdown.

The people have not been silenced. Indeed, lockdown might even have amplified their voices, concentrating attention on institutional racism that has been going on for decades, centuries.

Mutual-support coronavirus groups have provided channels for communication about BLM actions. Given the disproportionately high death rate among black and ethnic minority health workers, the issues of BLM and coronavirus overlap, with racism at the centre. As calls to 'defund the police' mount, the challenge to failing states is taken to another level.

Two things are happening at once, which may seem contradictory but are actually complementary. On the one hand, we are seeing the possibility of a bigger, more interventionist, more economically Keynesian state that actually looks after its citizens.

On the other, people who may never have experienced it before have been getting a taste of mutual aid, both as givers and receivers. In the fire of the pandemic an anarchist concept has become a solid reality.

These two possibilities, a bigger, more caring state and a flowering of social movements, can work together to transform and heal. Our collective vulnerability could, should, must unite us. ●

NUMBERS OF CASES AND FATALITIES WERE CORRECT AT THE TIME OF WRITING.

1 The World Bank, 'The global economic outlook during the Covid-19 pandemic', 8 June 2020, nin.tl/WB-outlook 2 Soutik Biswas, 'Are more women dying of Covid-19 in India?', BBC News, 22 June 2020, nin.tl/Biswas 3 Oxfam International press release, 9 July 2020, nin.tl/Oxfam-hunger 4 *The Ecologist*, 11 June 2020, nin.tl/Monbiot 5 For latest figures, see Worldometer's coronavirus update at nin.tl/world-figures 6 *Cuba Sil*, Cuba Solidarity Campaign, Summer 2020. 7 D-Econ, 'Re-centering the Global South in response to the pandemic', webinar 22 July 2020 and IMF, 'Vietnam's success in containing Covid-19...', nin.tl/IMF-Vietnam 8 'It's time to convene nations to end this pandemic', 4 July 2020, nin.tl/convene 9 'A tale of two Brazils', TNI, 22 June 2020, nin.tl/TNI-Brazil

ACTION AND INFO



Global Call to Action Against Poverty

gcap.global
Global South-led movement against inequality

Transnational Institute

tni.org
Research and advocacy for justice and sustainability

Tricontinental

thetricontinental.org
Global South research and social movements network

Jubilee Debt Campaign

jubileedebt.org.uk
Updates on debt slavery

Tax Justice Network

taxjustice.net
Campaigns against tax havens and financial secrecy

Global Justice Now

globaljustice.org.uk
For fairness in international relations

Health Action Interaction

haiweb.org
Advancing access to medicines for everyone

Knowledge Ecology International

keionline.org
Intellectual property as public good

Global Green New Deal

globalgnd.org
From crisis to justice

Corporate Europe Observatory

corporateeurope.org
Exposes corporate lobbying

People's Bailout

thepeoplesbailout.org
Recovery by and for the people

Access Now

accessnow.org
Defends users' digital rights

ETC Group

etcgroup.org
monitors corporations' impact on biodiversity and agriculture

Via Campesina

viacampesina.org
international movement of peasant farmers

GRAIN

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BEYOND BORDERS

Can we rescue the notion of global health from the jaws of the pandemic? asks Dinyar Godrej.

In June, while the Covid-19 pandemic was at its peak in the Indian capital Delhi, a young YouTube-based reporter stationed himself outside a hospital and recorded the stories of frustration, panic and anguish as distraught relatives tried to find treatment for their loved ones within an all-but-collapsed medical system.¹

One man recounted how, after getting no information, he had asked a guard to take a phone in to his father within a hospital only to have the guard return to inform him that he had died.

Another man was waiting for the police to turn up. He had heard nothing from or about his father from hospital staff for six agonizing days, until finally being told that his father was missing. 'I have no idea where he is. Is he even alive or not? Tell us something, it has been six days.'

Yet another began calmly enough. His father, who had been in a government hospital, had not even had access to oxygen and had asked his son to arrange to move him to a private one. When, finally, a bed was found, he was told that the treatment would cost

\$5,000-\$7,000 for 10 days; \$13,500 if a ventilator was required. Private hospitals across the country had started price-gouging in the wake of the pandemic. Scrambling to arrange the cash, he got his father admitted, but later received a call from the patient in the bed next to his father's.

Here his composure crumpled. The patient told him how his father had been scared after seeing conditions in the private hospital from the start. One evening, as he took a few steps, the father collapsed and was helped back into bed by the patient. Then they started calling for help, but to no avail. 'If they had put him on oxygen or a ventilator, your father would have survived,' the patient told him. 'He died in torment here.'

At the time of writing, random sample tests suggested that nearly one in four of all Delhi's residents had been exposed to Covid-19.²

Up until mid-July the obvious contrast to much of the rest of India's straining health services was the communist-run state of Kerala, which had had the country's first coronavirus case back in January. A combination of solid

investment in public health, high literacy, public engagement and a clued-up, pandemic-ready health minister in the form of former secondary-school teacher KK Shailaja led to remarkable early successes. Kerala's public-health effort focused on prevention and containment through aggressive testing, contact-tracing and immediately quarantining people suspected of being infected, while seeing to it that they were properly fed. Those who landed up in hospital found the experience much better managed and more humane than what was unfolding elsewhere in India. Shailaja was lauded in both the national and international press. By May, this state of nearly 35 million people was reporting days with no new cases.

But it was a case of cheering too soon – July saw a surge, which is largely being blamed on an influx of people returning from the Gulf and other Indian states where they had found themselves suddenly out of work, and consequent community transmission. The numbers overwhelmed the system. Still, the state has the lowest case fatality rate in the country and the Kerala government is

creating hundreds of Covid-19 treatment centres in the villages where the disease has spread.³

Showing the way

Perhaps unsurprisingly, showing the way in terms of public health in these privatized times is Cuba, which has the highest ratio of doctors to citizens of any country in the world. Reluctant to lose out on tourist dollars, the country held out until 20 March before stopping new arrivals. But it had already got a 'prevention and control plan' ready in January, and when the first infections were confirmed, it was actioned. Aside from getting the highly educated Cuban public ready with information about symptoms and precautions, starting track and trace and isolation for those who may have come into contact with the virus, this involved sending doctors, nurses and medical students into the community to screen every home on the island every single day. Testing was ramped up, despite the expense. Every person testing positive was hospitalized so they could be better monitored. For sure, the heavy state that ensures isolation is institutional rather than at home and mandates people not wearing face masks in public are penalized, even jailed, is the flipside to this success.⁴ But Cuba has kept overall numbers low and seen a sharp drop in cases since mid-April. The United States has, by contrast, 59 times the rate of infections per million people.

Choppy waters

Government interventions around the world have demonstrated that privatized healthcare, which is essentially unequal

Coronaman: Delhi Police get creative with this cut-out poster warning residents to stay at home – a tough ask for daily wage earners.

MAYANK MAKHIJA/NURPHOTO/PA IMAGES



Bobbing about as we try to negotiate the ever-changeable waters of this pandemic, it becomes clear that international medical solidarity could corral the largest number of lifeboats

healthcare, is incapable of dealing with a public-health crisis. Additionally, tackling the pandemic through lockdowns on the one end and expensive tertiary medical care on the other, has tested the wealthiest of nations, let alone the poorest. The demand for well-provisioned healthcare as a public good is resurgent, contrary to years of rightwing economic dogma. In many parts of the Global South, as governments try desperately to resuscitate public-health systems all but killed off by the diktat of international financial institutions, the pain is most acute.

Bobbing about as we try to negotiate the ever-changeable waters of this pandemic, it becomes clear that international medical solidarity could corral the largest number of lifeboats. Yet consider the fate of the World Health Organization (WHO), the only body qualified to make a useful international intervention, during the pandemic. It struggles to collect its membership dues – the biggest laggard being the US, which eventually announced it was pulling out altogether as a result of Trumpesque pique. Caught up in the political wrangling of the US and China, the WHO has had to walk an unnecessarily careful line, where it cannot be seen to be critical of political leadership while it tries to advance a public-health agenda which is pulled this way and that by political interests. It is forced into being cautious when the need of the hour is for it to be a bold champion of health equality.

Whose vaccine?

In May the WHO adopted a proposal for a Covid-19 Technology Access Pool calling for ‘the voluntary sharing of knowledge, intellectual property, and data, and a guarantee of free access and use by WHO member countries of drugs and vaccines that are developed’.⁵ The need of the hour, one could be forgiven

for thinking, yet it was endorsed by only 30 countries, of which only 4 were high income, and was shunned by the pharma giants collaborating on Covid-19 vaccines and treatments.

Typically, there are parallel and competing initiatives running to try to secure the holy grail vaccine for low-income countries should it arrive, among them the Gavi (the Vaccine Alliance) Covax Advance Market Commitment (AMC), which seeks to raise billions to guarantee the bulk buying of promising vaccine candidates in order to stimulate manufacturers to bump up production capacity. Such AMCs have been criticized for not ensuring the lowest price and the initiative itself is a public-private scheme that has come under attack for its secretive way of operating as well as for the likelihood that it would tie up a huge chunk of aid money when global aid budgets are shrinking.⁵

And beyond that there is vaccine chauvinism, with the US, that egregious PPE-hijacker, in the lead. Other wealthy countries are also throwing money at promising vaccine candidates with their own AMCs in order to secure huge pre-orders of doses, in the hope that if one works their populations would be covered. The UK government is reported to have bought in on up to 12. In this me-first scramble to hoard, the poorest nations of the world have no say.

Meanwhile the pandemic continues to accelerate, bringing with it massive disruptions to other vaccination programmes and health interventions that will result in an overall rise in the disease burden, beyond Covid-19.

The current model of vaccine development usually involves public (and sometimes philanthropic) funding at the research and development stage, carried out in academic laboratories, with subsequent licensing to a big pharmaceutical

player for manufacture and distribution. AstraZeneca, which has paired up with the University of Oxford researchers, has said it will make no profit from their vaccine candidate (which has had good results so far in trials), if successful, and make it available at cost. Global justice campaigners view such claims with deep suspicion.⁶ Time and transparency will tell.

But many medical experts – and indeed thinking laypersons – find that this model is far from the best we can do. Vaccine development has been sliding anyway since the pharma companies are less interested in one-shot drugs. As an international group of 6,000 academics put it in a public statement: ‘Profitability is an intolerable yardstick when it comes to our health.’⁷ Can we imagine a future where such essential medical innovation remains public and free of patent, right from research through to production and dissemination? Where nations join hands to pursue global health over profit?

So far Covid-19 has taught us many things about inequality and division. We should be learning that this crisis won’t be sorted by either the market or nationalism. And we should be asking what it would take to make healthcare a right and a public good and then doing our damndest to achieve that outcome. ●

¹ ScoopWhoop Unscripted channel, YouTube, 21 June 2020, nln.tl/Delhi ² BBC News, ‘Nearly one in four in Delhi had Covid-19, study says’, 21 July 2020, nln.tl/BBC-Delhi ³ Soutik Biswas, ‘How Kerala’s Covid ‘success story’ came undone’, BBC News, 21 July 2020, nln.tl/Kerala ⁴ Ed Augustin, ‘Cuba sets example...’, *The Guardian*, 7 June 2020, nln.tl/Cuba-example and Emily Morris, Ilan Kelman, ‘Coronavirus response: why Cuba is such an interesting case’, *The Conversation*, 15 April 2020, nln.tl/Cuba-response ⁵ Ann Danaiya Usher, ‘Covid-19 vaccines for all?’, *The Lancet*, 13 June 2020, nln.tl/vaccine ⁶ Heidi Chow, ‘4 reasons we should be worried about big pharma’s grip over publicly funded Covid-19 vaccines’, *Global Justice Now*, 21 July 2020, nln.tl/worries ⁷ democratizingwork.org

GREEN AND JUST

*How to finance a Green New Deal that is truly global?
Fadhel Kaboub has a proposal that builds in colonial
and climate reparations.*

For years, Green New Deal frameworks have been debated across the world. How can climate change and economic inequality be addressed at the same time? The Covid-19 pandemic has further revealed the structural weaknesses in the global economy, heightening concerns about these two issues. Such crises cannot be tackled by national policies in the Global North alone. The same applies to developing a global Green New Deal (GND). What would it look like and how might it be financed?

The three pieces of the puzzle we have today are: the planet is on fire; we have millions of people who want to work; and we have increasingly cheaper, more reliable and more efficient technological solutions that can be deployed on a global scale to reduce both carbon emissions and economic inequality.

The list of ‘low-hanging fruit’ solutions is very long, including scaling up renewable energy, reducing food waste and switching to lower-energy lighting. But let’s also recognize that although the current state of technology is good, it’s not good enough. Consider the extractive impact of scaling up the production

of solar panels, wind turbines, batteries, and electric vehicles. Mining for cobalt, lithium and rare earth metals will have a devastating ecological effect on some of the world’s most vulnerable communities. Therefore, it is vital that we dedicate a substantial amount of resources to invest in research in and development of low-impact materials. We also need to build the infrastructure for a 100-per-cent circular economy in which every product’s user manual includes a proper ‘living will’ that indicates how all of its components will eventually be reused and reintroduced back into the circle.

These solutions are within reach, but we are told that the main obstacle is finding the money. Conventional economic thinking claims that there are only two possible ways to pay for a GND: tax revenues or government borrowing, which must be paid eventually via future tax revenues. Both these options require higher tax rates on the rich, transnational corporations, fossil-fuel companies and banks. All of which sounds perfect! However, there are two fundamental flaws in this approach. First, there is a logical inconsistency. If the funding

comes from the rich and powerful corporations (which are very influential in politics), then we would want them to be even richer (which makes them more influential in politics) so we can tax them more. Second, the conventional claims that larger government deficits and a rising national debt would cause inflation, higher interest rates and insolvency have been proven wrong. Case in point: the US and the Eurozone since 2008, or Japan since the 1990s with its current record of 230-per-cent debt-to-GDP ratio with no hint of inflation.

I believe that a more coherent framework for a GND, both at the national and global level, is offered by Modern 

Above right: A man sells ice cream from an Ola cart in Bloubergstrand, South Africa. Ola is owned by Unilever. Rather than giving transnational corporations more power, a Global Green New Deal could be partly financed through climate reparations.

LOUIS SMIT/UNSPLASH

Below right: A student takes part in the September 2019 Global Climate Strike in Kolkata, India.

SOPA IMAGES LIMITED/ALAMY



Monetary Theory (MMT), which highlights the difference between the spending capacity of the sovereign issuer of the national currency (the government) and that of local authorities, businesses and households (the currency users). Whereas conventional economics claims that government spending is limited by its taxing and borrowing capacity, MMT takes the approach that the scope is typically much larger than that. Fiscal space is constrained by potential inflation risks, which may materialize for two reasons: first, inflation occurs due to the lack of real productive capacity such as skilled labour, infrastructure, technology and other inputs. The good news is that productive capacity is producible, and its production creates even more jobs. Second, inflation may also occur due to abusive price-setting behaviour by powerful corporations which raise prices of, say, pharmaceuticals or energy, simply because they can. This kind of inflation does not need to mean a less ambitious GND programme, but rather can be dealt with by taxing and regulating these abusive price-setting practices out of existence. In other words, making those markets more competitive.

Spending and taxation at the national level are both very important but cannot

and should not be linked in a way that requires taxing this to pay for that. Therefore, we should spend on national priorities such as a GND and at the same time tax excessive wealth, pollution, speculation and predatory market behaviour out of existence. This way, we do not need the money or permission of

We do not need the money or permission of the billionaires to fund a Green New Deal, but we can still tax their ill-gotten wealth out of existence

the billionaires to fund a GND, but we can still tax their ill-gotten wealth out of existence. In other words, we need to stop thinking in terms of redistribution of wealth and instead establish a system of just and equitable *pre-distribution* in the first place.

Countries enjoy different degrees of monetary sovereignty. The spending capacity of countries in the Global North is much higher than that of the Global South. Unless we devise a just system to finance a GND framework in the Global South, a Global GND is not possible.

Rather than arguing for foreign aid or a tax on the Global North, I would argue for reparations for colonial and post-colonial harm done to the people of the colonized lands and to the planet.

Effective reparations require three key elements: telling the truth, offering a genuine public apology and repairing the damage. A Global GND could include a Global Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to hear and acknowledge the grievances of people who suffer the socio-economic, environmental and humanitarian consequences of colonial and post-colonial policies that have contributed to climate change and global inequality. The purpose

of TRCs is not to send a guilty party to prison, but rather to allow the truth to emerge, the harm to be acknowledged, a genuine public apology to be made, and for both parties to heal. It is a form of restorative justice.

A Global GND reparations programme must do three things: one, provide financial compensation for climate and colonial debt (that includes Global South sovereign debt cancellation); two, transfer technology and resources to regions or countries that require assistance; and three, redesign the global economic and financial architecture for a more sustainable, prosperous and equitable system.

The current global financial system extracts nearly \$2 trillion annually in net payments from the Global South, taking into account all global transactions. It is a broken system that must be repaired. Without a structural transformation, the human species will not survive. I believe MMT offers the coherent framework to pay for a Global GND that is consistent with restorative justice and sustainable prosperity principles. ●

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Is it time to tax excessive wealth out of existence?

TOA HEFTIBA/UNSPLASH

5 POLLUTERS MAKING THE PANDEMIC PAY

As Covid-19 spread across the world, greenhouse-gas emissions plummeted, thanks to a reduction in human activity. Residents of some of the most polluted places on the planet experienced clear skies and fresh air, perhaps for the first time. But meanwhile, writes Amy Hall, some of the world's most polluting companies and industries have been using the pandemic to maintain and even ramp up their environmentally ruinous activities.

Nothing to see here

In June the Slovenian government announced a list of over 180 investments aimed at kick-starting the economy post-Covid-19, including gas projects, road construction and a new nuclear power plant. It also suspended environmental and nature protections, by speeding up construction and development permits. The rights of campaigners to challenge such development projects were changed so that most of the country's environmental and conservation NGOs are not eligible to challenge them in the courts until the end of 2021, when many projects will already be in progress.

It's all mine

Analysis by a worldwide coalition of NGOs found that mining companies have used 'any means necessary' to continue working, including lobbying to weaken measures that limit the negative impacts of their activities and pushing to be categorized as an 'essential' service. This has put local communities and company workforces at risk, particularly in rural and indigenous areas where people are already more vulnerable to Covid-19. Meanwhile, governments have tried to shut down resistance, in some cases deploying military and the police. Canadian company Yamana Gold has reportedly taken advantage of the shutdown to advance its Suyai exploration-stage project in the province of Chubut, Argentina, where mining has been banned since 2003. In May, people took to the

streets for a socially distanced protest and many received threats from the police.

Plastic is back

No longer a relic of our more destructive past, plastic has made a comeback thanks to Covid-19. Industry lobbyists have been sure to capitalize on this moment, calling on governments and executives to delay or relax legislation on single-use plastic. 'At a time when people need factual medical research to inform their decisions around protecting their families, the plastics industry has worked to exploit our fears for profit,' said Ivy Schlegel from Greenpeace USA. In June, over 125 health experts from 19 countries published a statement to reassure people that reusables were still safe to use.¹ Plastic production relies heavily on fossil fuels and petrochemical plants are often located in low-income and minority neighbourhoods – the same communities that in countries like the US and Britain are most impacted by Covid-19.

Getting back in the skies

As countries tried to curtail the spread of Covid-19 by restricting travel, the air travel industry took a massive hit. Before Covid-19 took hold the industry seemed unstoppable. Greenhouse-gas emissions from commercial air travel were growing faster than predicted. One study estimated that by 2050, plane emissions would take up a quarter of the world's 'carbon budget'. Covid-19 forced us to break our flying habits but instead of

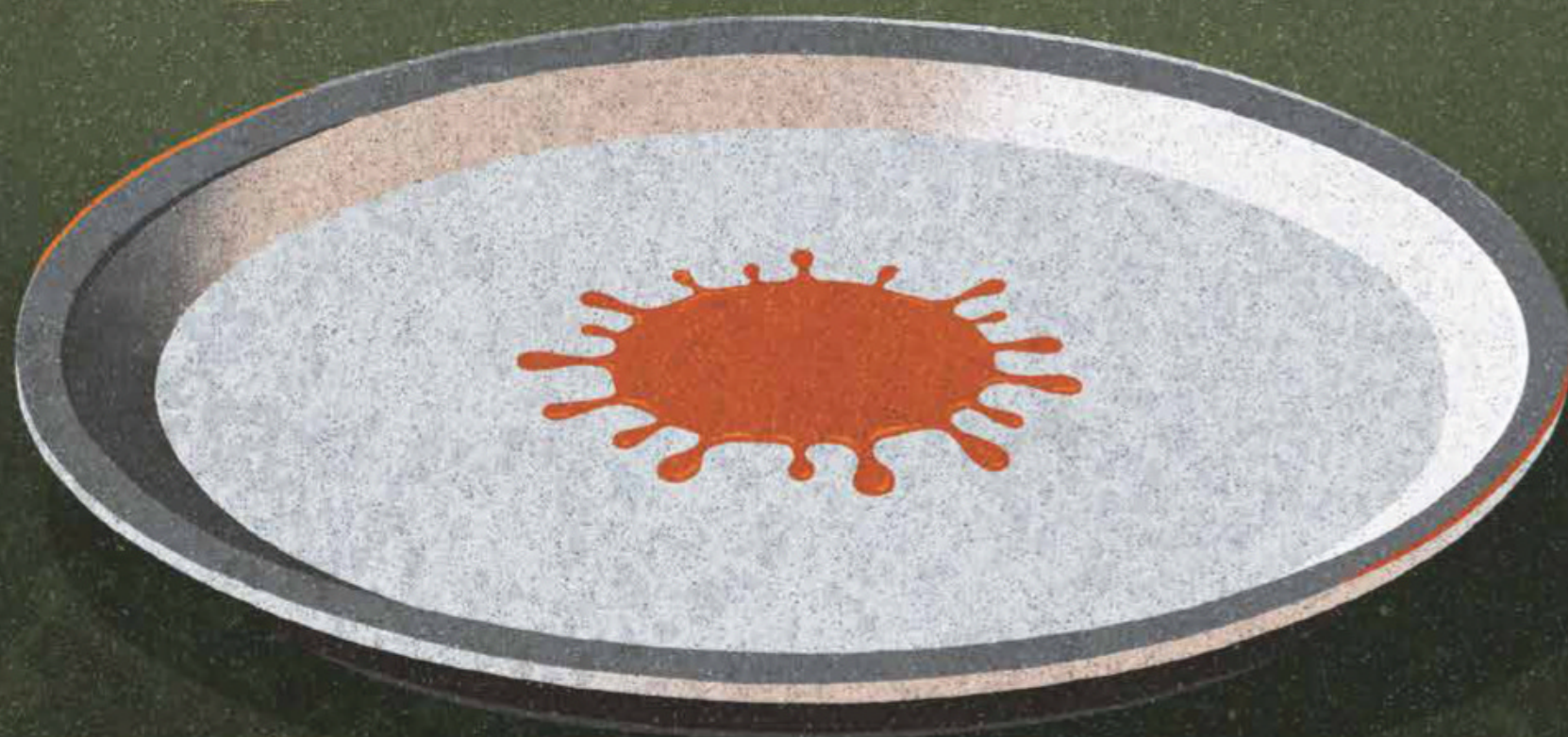
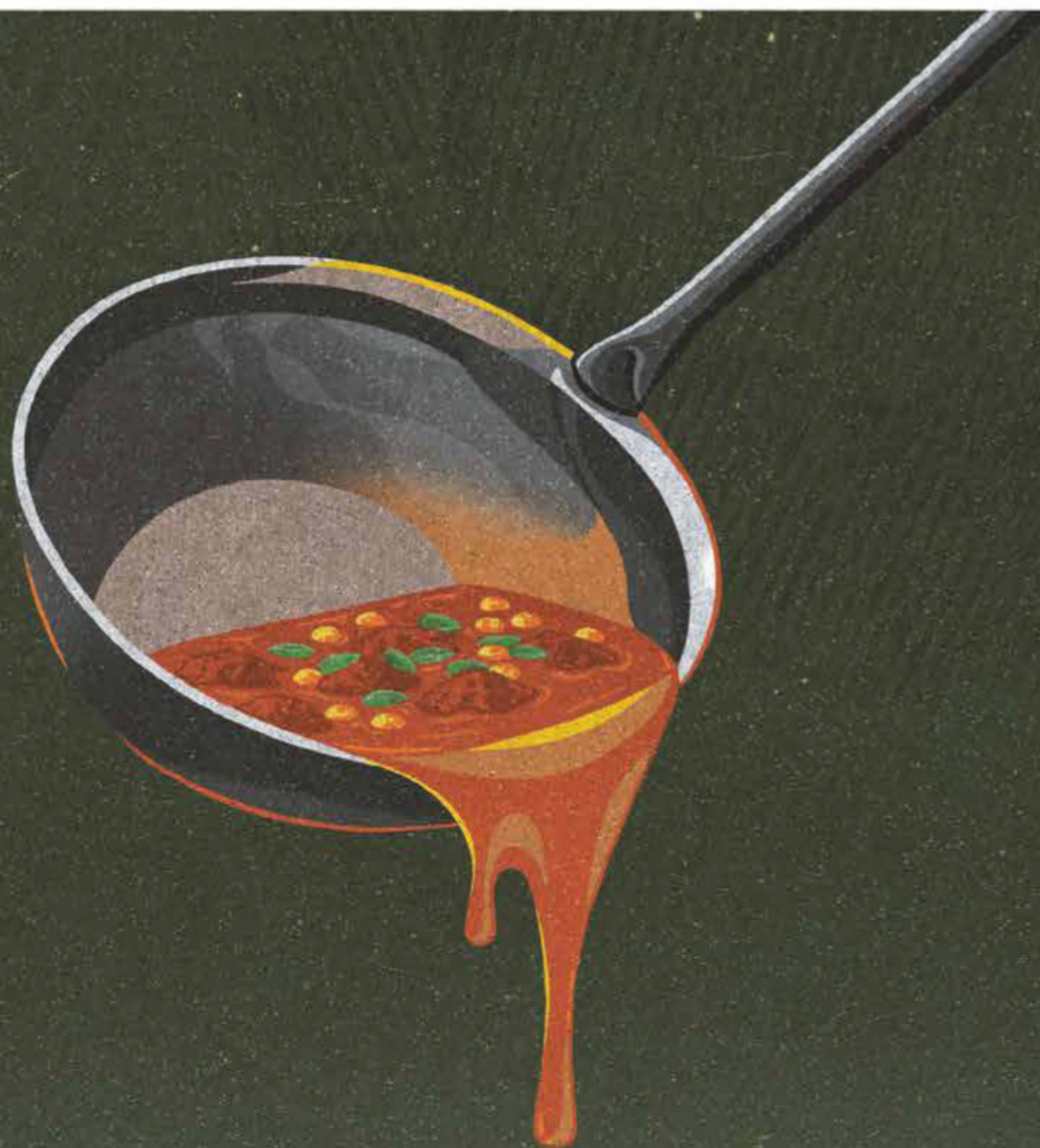
supporting workers into greener jobs, governments began to bail out the industry. Industry lobbyists worked hard to make this happen and to gain other concessions. In April, European Commissioner for Transport Adina Vălean said in an interview that it was the wrong time to attach climate and environment conditions to state aid for airlines.

Full of gas

In the Australian state of Victoria, gas has been given the green light during Covid-19 shutdowns. The Victorian parliament lifted a moratorium on onshore gas development in June and in July; two permits were granted for offshore gas exploration. The announcement was called 'deeply disappointing' by environmental campaigners who are concerned about the impact on marine life and fisheries. 'There can be no doubt that seismic testing will impact on marine life, including whales,' said Friends of the Earth co-ordinator Cam Walker in a statement. Local fishers in Victoria have previously reported an 80-per-cent drop in catch in the wake of seismic testing.² ●

¹ 'Health Expert Statement Addressing Safety of Reusables and COVID-19', 22 June 2020, nin.tl/Plastic ² Rio Davis and Andy Burns, 'Victorian fishers say catch has dropped by 80 per cent since the start of seismic surveying', 7 June 2020, nin.tl/Fish

Check out Temperature Check on page 49 for some of ways climate activists have been fighting against corporate bailouts for polluters.



DEATH BY COVID-19 – OR HUNGER?

The pandemic has left millions of people on the brink of starvation. Hazel Healy asks why our food system is failing the poorest so badly – and offers a glimpse of a more equitable path. With extra reporting by Mohamed Camara.

Illustration: Pete Reynolds

Sierra Leone's three-day lockdown was announced without warning. Mummy K, a fish seller from Freetown, watched in despair as her fish spoiled, the ice melting around it. 'When I bought the fish, the price was high. So it was a big loss for me,' she explains. Three months later, her colleagues are back out again selling, but she is sat playing Ludo.

'I don't know how to get started up again,' she says. Her income supported three others, including her four-year-old daughter, who are all now living off a dwindling stockpile of *garri*, a starchy cassava flour, saved for shocks like these. She's watching her daughter carefully for any signs of sickness. 'Children eat money,' she sighs.

Mummy K is one of thousands of women who work in the informal food economy in Sierra Leone, one of 27 countries now facing crisis-levels of hunger, according to the UN's World Food Programme. All over the world, the pandemic – and measures put in place to stop it – have been pushing hungry communities over the edge. For many, it stacks up with conflict, climate disruption and grinding poverty.

The warnings are dire. The World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that the number of people who experience 'crisis-level' hunger will rise to 270

million before the end of the year, an 82-per-cent increase since 2019. This means that large swathes of people in the poorest countries now face the prospect of starvation. Already, *The Lancet* reports, 10,000 more children have died from virus-linked hunger every month since the pandemic began.¹

How has it got this bad in just a few months?

Last straw

Covid-19 has revealed the fragility and deep power imbalances within our food system. Millions of people were already just one step away from hunger before the pandemic hit. This is not a problem of production – harvests have held up, and in any case our food system already produces enough to feed everyone.² The problem is that since lockdown's economic fallout, people cannot afford to buy food.

The poorest people already spend over 70 per cent of their income on food so a five-per-cent decline in the world economy, as predicted by the International Monetary Fund, immediately hits the most vulnerable hardest. In April, a survey by the Danish Refugee Council found only 3 per cent of Syrian families living in Jordan had a family member in work, compared to 65 per cent pre

Covid-19. Almost 80 per cent said that they didn't have enough food to get through the next three weeks.

A reduction in wages for migrant workers has rippled home. The World Bank estimates a 20-per-cent drop in remittances from abroad, equivalent to \$100 billion, which is helping to drive a threefold increase in hunger in Latin America.

Nor is the rich world exempt. Data from the UK government shows that during the first few weeks of lockdown as many as 7.7 million adults shrank portions or missed meals. In the US, a record 54 million people do not know where their next meal is coming from.

Hunger is not confined to poor city-dwellers. It is also stalking smallholder farmers – responsible for feeding 70 per cent of people in Latin America, South and East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa – who have been paralysed by blanket lockdown measures.³ In Burkina Faso, where over half the country already goes hungry, Danssanin Lanizou told the Associated Press how her family was cut off from the market, causing their vegetable sales to collapse. Since she became too malnourished to breastfeed, her one-month old baby's weight had halved in a month. As less food reaches cities, prices are rising for consumers; at

As states scrambled to compost pigs' remains, hunger in the US was rocketing

the same time, a glut of stranded food in rural areas is causing prices to decline for producers – a phenomenon that is playing out all over the world. With a 50-kilo bag of onions now fetching a dollar less at the market, Lanizou's husband has been able to buy less seed for next year – ensuring the cycle of hunger continues.

Lockdown has also kept fishers from the seas. In Kenya, curfews have curtailed night-fishing of Nile Perch and Omena (or Dagaa), an affordable nutritious small fish for local consumption. In Tombo, south of Freetown, similar restrictions led to riots that left two people dead after just 15 of a 400-strong fleet of pirogues were allowed out to sea.

Supply-chain crunch

The Covid-19 pandemic has also caused havoc with the international supply chains. A quarter of all foodstuffs are now traded internationally – an interruption in one place can send shockwaves across the world.

The disruption has shown how countries in the Global South that rely on imports to feed their populations are at the mercy of market shocks and trade shifts. As the pandemic took hold, Chinese aquaculture – the source of nearly half the world's fish – dried up overnight. When trade resumed, China diverted its farmed tilapia from Global South countries to more lucrative North American markets, which had opened up as restaurants closed and frozen fish became the order of the day.⁴

China's trade re-route meant that frozen fillets doubled in price in Nairobi, Kenya, which imported \$23 million worth of Chinese tilapia in 2018. At the same time, Kenyan farmers lost access to lucrative EU export markets for their flowers, fruit and vegetables as airports

closed and European cities went into lockdown. By early August, sales were picking up again, but the *Financial Times* reports that Kenya's horticultural sector – 80 per cent of which consists of small-holder farms – is still losing an estimated \$1 million per day. One herb producer was forced to dump 60 million tonnes of basil, mint, rosemary and thyme when his Italian buyer ceased orders. Another farmer, Gerison Ndwiga, describes how he left more than seven tonnes of ripe haricot beans in the fields to rot.⁵ Coronavirus has left Kenya's horticulture industry on the brink of collapse with 350,000 jobs at risk.

Even rich countries with a stable food supply have had their complacency shaken. While continuity held up in the UK, a recent paper in *Nature Food* puts this down to 'contingent luck'. For 95 per cent of its food, Britain relies on supermarkets, which use 'just-in-time' supply chains powered by algorithms. But reliance on seasonal migrant labour and a 'dangerous dependence' on Spain and The Netherlands for its fresh vegetables leaves the UK vulnerable to deadlocks and blockages. With half of Britain's food imported, the prospect of a 'no deal Brexit', combined with climate impacts, means the food supply can no longer 'be left to the market,' the authors conclude.⁶ The UK's Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee meanwhile has recently called for a Minister of Food Security for Britain.

The industrialized supply chain has been found wanting in other ways. Food-processing factories proved to be the perfect incubator for the virus and repeated outbreaks among workers led to closures of farms, packing plants and abattoirs. A tuna factory operated by the world's biggest fish processor, Thai Union, was the source of 11 per cent of Ghana's infections

in April, while an outbreak in slaughterhouses forced the entire Gütersloh district of north-western Germany back into lockdown in June, incidentally lifting the lid on the cramped, dirty, living conditions of migrant workers there.

The meat industry stands out as the worst offender worldwide. In the US, powerful food corporations JBS, Cargill, Tyson and others secured an executive order from Donald Trump to keep their meat-packing plants open. Coronavirus rampaged through the production lines, killing at least 70 workers. The industry is so highly concentrated in the hands of so few companies – and so finely tuned for efficiency – that when Covid-19 caused 20 per cent of meat plants to close there was a backlog of animals ready for slaughter with nowhere to go. The *New York Times* described how some farmers gassed and shot hundreds of thousands of pigs that had grown 'too heavy to kill' and discarded the carcasses; others tried – and failed – to sell hogs on Facebook and Craig's List. Staff shortages also led to over two million birds being gassed by poultry giant Allen Harim Foods. To make matters more dystopian, as states scrambled to compost pigs' remains, hunger in the US was rocketing.

The powerful, well-connected corporations not only weathered the storm, they thrived. Not because they were necessarily better placed to feed people but because, unlike small farmers and fishers, they were allowed to continue their business unchecked. As coronavirus spread, their profits grew. Campaign group GRAIN reports that, in April, Nestlé paid out a record \$8 billion to shareholders and executives – nearly double the food-emergency fund requested by the UN's WFP; Bayer, the world's largest seed and agrochemical company paid out \$2.8 billion to shareholders; Cargill, the world's largest agribusiness company, is on track to top its 2019 record pay-out of \$640 million.

Industrial farming has also helped to create the kinds of environments that give rise to pathogens such as coronavirus in the first place. Since 1940, agriculture has been associated with 50 per cent

SOURCES FOR FACTS ON PAGE 31. 1 *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) 2020*. FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, nin.tl/SOFI2020

2 *Global Nutrition Report 2020*, globalnutritionreport.org 3 WHO news-room, nin.tl/WHOfact-sheet 4 'The Global Syndemic of Obesity, Undernutrition, and Climate Change: The Lancet Commission report,' July 2019, nin.tl/Syndemic 5 WHO newsroom, nin.tl/SOFIpressrelease 6 'The Hunger Virus', Oxfam Media Briefing, 9 July 2020, nin.tl/HungerVirus 7 Eduardo Botti Abbade, 'Estimating the nutritional loss and the feeding potential ...' in *World Development* (Vol 134) October 2020, nin.tl/FoodWasteFeeding 8 ReFed analysis, nin.tl/FinancialWaste 9 foodwise.com.au 10 'Consumer Co-operatives...', *Daily Maverick*, July 2020, nin.tl/DailyMaverick 11 SOFI 2020 (see 1a) FAO scenarios based on projections around economic data and food availability.

HUNGER THE FACTS

Covid-19



Our dysfunctional food system was failing before Covid-19.

HUNGRIER¹

Since 2014, the number of people who are chronically undernourished – unable to fulfil their food needs long term – has been rising.

1 in 9

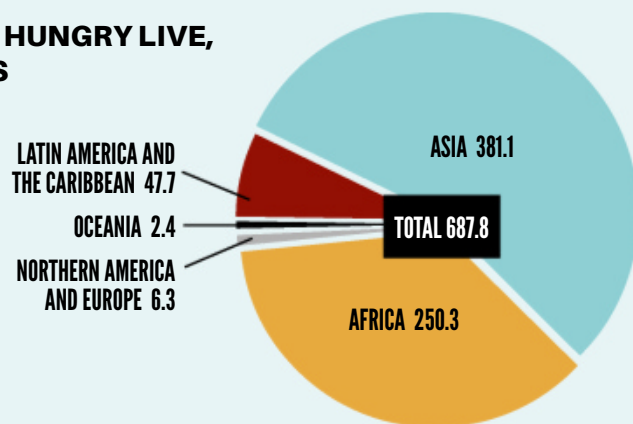
people suffer severe hunger worldwide.

19%

of people in Africa go hungry in Africa, the highest rate in the world.

Up to **1/3** of the world's children under-5 were stunted (too short) or wasted (too thin) in 2019 (98% reside in low and middle-income countries).

WHERE THE HUNGRY LIVE, IN MILLIONS



HEAVIER

Obesity is rising in almost all countries and has tripled worldwide since 1975. It's no longer solely a rich-world problem – 45% of obese under-5s live in Asia, and 25% in Africa.^{1,2}

1 in 3

people are overweight or obese.³

\$50 M

was spent by corporations lobbying against US government initiatives to reduce consumption of sugary drinks in 2016.⁴

POORLY FED

Every country in the world now suffers from malnutrition. Increasingly, high rates of under-nutrition, overnutrition/obesity and micro-nutrient deficiency co-exist in the same place (country, household or even the same person). This is known as the double, or even triple, burden of malnutrition.

57%

of people in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa cannot afford safe, nutritious and sufficient food.¹

3 Bn

people are unable to afford a nutritious diet worldwide; healthy food is out of reach for poor people in every region of the world.⁵



OVERABUNDANCE

Hunger has nothing to do with scarcity.

↑ 300%

Food production has increased by 300% in the past 50 years; world population has grown by 120%.

\$18 Bn

was paid out to shareholders by the biggest food and drink companies between January and June 2020 (\$10 billion more than the Food segment of UN's Covid-19 humanitarian appeal).⁶



WASTED

An estimated 30% of the world's food goes uneaten – more than enough to feed the world's hungry.⁷

\$218 Bn

is spent in the US every year on growing, processing, transporting and disposing of food that is never eaten.⁸

20%

of food shopping is thrown away by Australians every week – equivalent to 1 out of 5 bags.⁹



TIPPED INTO CRISIS

Covid-19 could leave 270 million people on the brink of starvation.⁵ That's more than the population of Brazil and the UK combined.

12,000 deaths?

By the end of 2020, 12,000 people in the Global South could die daily from hunger linked to Covid-19.⁶

47%

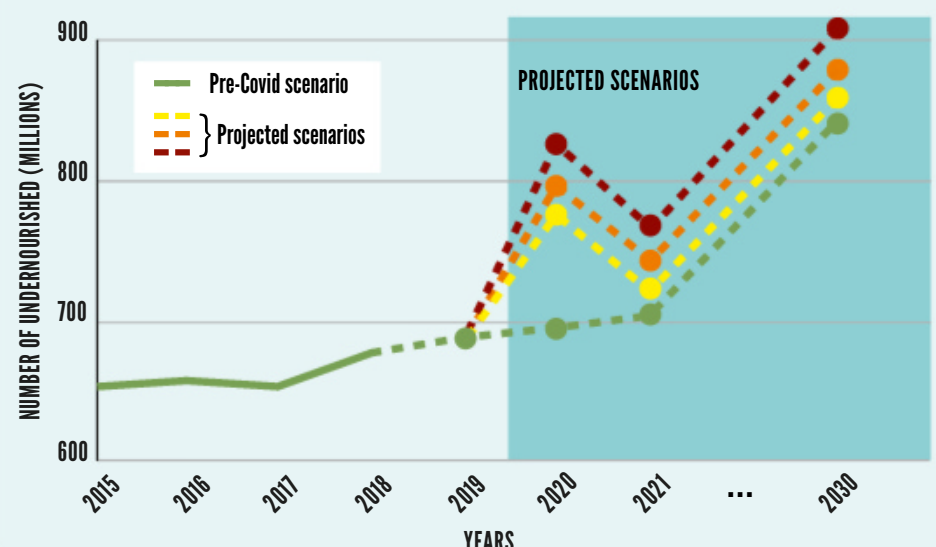
In April, nearly half of households ran out of food in South Africa.¹⁰

3.7 M

people in the UK used food banks in the first weeks of lockdown, a 90% increase year on year.⁶



PREDICTED IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HUNGER¹¹



of all zoonotic infectious diseases – those that jump from animals to humans – as it eats into forests, grasslands and the last wild corners of the world. While many new diseases originate in wildlife, for some of the most serious recent outbreaks – nipah, MERS, Avian Flu, Swine Flu – intensely reared livestock has acted as an ‘amplifier host’.⁷ As its fossil fuel-intensive inputs and transport bill drives up greenhouse gas emissions, the pandemic has shown industrial farming to be an ever more reckless and unsafe way to source our food.

Reimagined food ways

At the same time as the pandemic has brought huge challenges into focus it has also shown that disruptive change can open up new possibilities.

For starters, government authorities showed they could move, at speed, to protect the most vulnerable. By June, no fewer than 195 countries had planned or brought in more social protection, mostly via cash transfers. In the Indian state of Kerala, food distribution was secured by free community kitchens run by women’s networks. In Johannesburg, South Africa, the city bought food from local markets, advised by nutritionists, for those out of work. In Wuhan, China, buses were commandeered to deliver food, a technique copied in Quito, Ecuador, where the city’s urban gardens were also dispatching 11 tonnes of vegetables to vulnerable neighbourhoods every week. Toronto turned its libraries into food hubs while New York had thousands of out-of-work taxi drivers delivering food parcels.⁸

Grassroots responses flowered everywhere. From donations to the destitute in India and Pakistan, to London’s ‘Co-operation Kentish Town’, which put on hold plans to set up a food co-op and became Camden’s first food distribution network, delivering 22,000 food parcels. Or the Chilean bakers Elefante Blanco who provided bread to 300 families; or the Bevy Community Pub in Brighton that delivered 5,000 meals three times a week.

Farmers showed adaptability, creativity – and good use of social media. Kannaiyan Subramaniam from Tamil Nadu, India, turned to Twitter to shift nearly 100 tonnes of cabbage; producers and consumers linked up via WhatsApp. Sudha Narayanan from the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research reports how traditional food sellers – family-run

shops and pushcarts that still supply 90 per cent of the Indian market – proved more nimble than modern organized retailers. While malls remained shut, car mechanics were successfully reinventing themselves as fruit and vegetable vendors.

Localized food chains flourished. In the Philippines, the government collected surplus vegetables and took them to urban areas, generating income for producers and cutting out the intermediaries. In France, Poland, the US and China demand soared for community-supported agriculture schemes and farm shops and direct-sale online platforms were used to connect farmers and citizens.⁹ Similar schemes sprang up in Ghana as fishers delivered fresh seafood to households.

In South Africa, the *Daily Maverick* reports how the Ubuntu project brought together ‘poor people with surplus food and poor people without food’, channelling small farmers’ surpluses to those in need. Inspired by box schemes in Brazil and Canada where middle-class households pay upfront to cross-subsidize poorer households, the South African C-19 People’s Coalition plans to turn mutual-aid networks that sprang up during the pandemic into food-buying groups of consumer co-operatives, which can support small-scale producers.

New frontiers

The Covid-19 crisis has opened up space for new conversations. In the rich world, there is rising pressure on governments not to leave decision-making on food controls, supplies and prices to food retail giants – prompted not least by the knowledge that obesity gives you a 50 per cent greater chance of falling critically ill with coronavirus.¹⁰ In the UK, the government has rushed out an obesity strategy, with restrictions on both junk-food advertising and promotions of unhealthy foods in supermarkets.

In Kenya, the destruction of tonnes of French beans amid food shortages has been prompting a rethink about how and what the country produces. ‘Opportunities for tapping local and regional markets are becoming clearer after years of dependency on exports,’ according to Jane Ambuko, Head of Horticulture at the University of Nairobi. The lull in cheap Chinese fish imports has sparked talk of a revived domestic fishing industry.

Market failures have also given fresh weight to calls for a radical shift in

farming practices. Peasant and indigenous movements and their allies are using this moment to call for more sustainable, self-sufficient approaches that will protect against future shocks – food price hikes or the next pandemic. They call for farming that works in harmony with nature, combining plants and animals to regenerate soils, fertilize crops and fight pests, reducing the need for imported fertilizers, and strengthening local food chains.

The World Food Programme is calling for \$4.9 billion over the next six months to avert the worst. But it’s coming at time when rich nations are preoccupied with their own economic problems.

The crisis responses to Covid-19 could serve as the foundations for a transformed food system, one that is genuinely geared to feeding the least nourished worldwide. It could result in shorter supply chains where proceeds are distributed fairly, and in a rebalancing to the benefit of consumers and growers. The goal should be a system of trade that prioritizes a diverse, nutritious food supply while affording its workers and producers dignity and a living wage.

The prospect of multiple famines by the end of this year should tell us, if nothing else does, that food justice cannot wait. ●

¹ ‘Impacts of COVID-19 on childhood malnutrition and nutrition-related mortality’, *The Lancet*, July 2020, [nin.tl/Child-mortality](https://www.thelancet.com/journal/S0140-6736(20)31111-1) ² ‘The Hunger Virus’, Oxfam Media Briefing, 9 July 2020, [nin.tl/HungerVirus](https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-room/20200709-hunger-virus) ³ ‘Average farm size...’, LH Samberg et al, 2016 *Environmental Research Letters*, [nin.tl/SmallholderOutput](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214022316300011) ⁴ ‘Emerging COVID-19 impacts... lessons in the seafood system’, D Love et al, [nin.tl/SeafoodCovid](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1473207520300011) ⁵ ‘Covid-19 hitting Kenyan exports...’, P Fleming, Foodtank News, June 2020 [nin.tl/KenyaBeans](https://www.foodtanknews.com/covid-19-hitting-kenyan-exports/) ⁶ ‘Vulnerability of the UK’s food supply...’, P Garnett et al, *Nature Food*, Vol 1, 4 June 2020, [nin.tl/UKSupplyRisk](https://www.nature.com/articles/s43773-020-00001-1) ⁷ For Example ‘Emerging zoonotic diseases...’ R White and O Razgour, *Mammal Review*, June 2020, [nin.tl/ZoonoticDisease](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0025273020300011) ⁸ ‘How cities are feeding residents...’, C40 knowledge Hub, May 2020, [nin.tl/CityFeeders](https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/cities-are-feeding-residents/) ⁹ ‘Covid-19 and the Crisis in Food Systems’ IPES food, [nin.tl/CrisisSolutions](https://www.ipesfood.org/covid-19-and-the-crisis-in-food-systems/) ¹⁰ ‘Obesity and Covid-19: the role of the food industry’, *BMJ* 2020, [nin.tl/Obesity](https://www.bmj.com/lookup/doi/10.1136/bmj.n1136)

Over the coming year, New Internationalist will stay with the hunger story, exploring ways to transform our food systems so that everyone gets to eat. Stay tuned...

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A HUMAN STORY

According to the old adage, ‘the economy is a subset of society’. Now, more than ever, we need to act like we believe it, says Dinyar Godrej.

Extraordinary times, extraordinary measures: requiring stimulus packages, recovery packages, crisis packages, take your pick. As a pushy virus gatecrashed almost every sphere of human activity and took hostage much essential economic activity, the scramble to avert a plunge far, far worse than the 2008 crash began.

The nations of the G20 group of the world’s largest economies had by the end of March 2020 already committed to government spending totalling \$5 trillion to keep their own financial gears turning. Then along came the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) with an indecent proposal regarding much of the rest of the world. It called for a \$2.5-trillion coronavirus crisis package for what it still calls developing countries, broken down thus: \$1 trillion as debt cancellation, \$1 trillion made available through the use of special drawing rights with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – a kind of ‘liquidity injection’ – and a further \$500 billion dispersed as grants for immediate health recovery. UNCTAD even rather niftily pointed out that the amount proposed would have been delivered to these countries over the last decade *if* the wealthy nations had met their overseas aid targets.¹

Needless to say, the proposal has had little traction. Barely a month later, another communiqué issued from UNCTAD, with Richard Kozul-Wright, director of its globalization division, saying: ‘Recent calls for international solidarity point in the right direction but have

so far delivered little tangible support for developing countries.’ It also revealed that in 2020 and 2021, expected repayments by developing countries on their public external debt are estimated at nearly \$3.4 trillion, with about a third of that sum to be wrung out of the poorest nations.²

Hellish context

If the bald numbers aren’t bad enough, providing context makes it worse. These are the countries that have already been doubled over, some for decades, by high levels of debt servicing – to the extent that a big proportion of the taxes they raise goes towards that end rather than being invested in ways that benefit their people. The international institutions that have brokered loans, often to just continue this debt service, have insisted on privatizing everything as a condition, thus wrecking public services, including healthcare. All this before Covid-19.

Then the virus hits. A huge amount of capital immediately takes flight (so much for this being considered ‘investment’) – to the tune of \$88 billion by March.³ This pushes down the value of local currencies against the dollar, making both debt service and imports costlier. With lockdowns coming in, tax revenues drop while the need to provide social protection becomes urgent. Large parts of the population (up to 90 per cent in some poor countries) who have what are known as ‘informal jobs’ – day-to-day wage-earning jobs with no contracts of employment or safeguards – are suddenly prevented from working to survive. It’s hell in a handcart

any way you look at it – and still there’s that debt chewing away.

In July the G20 finance ministers gathered, amid growing calls from campaigners for debt cancellation, to discuss their Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) which could apply to up to 73 countries. What emerged from their deliberations was a decision to allow up to \$5.3 billion worth of debt repayments by these countries to other governments to be suspended – not a cancellation – from May to December 2020. (These payments would still need to be made at a later date, adding to future debt stock.) And they did nothing to force private creditors and multilateral institutions to do the same – this lot are due \$19.9 billion of payments over this period. Meanwhile the IMF has been agreeing new loans to highly indebted countries, basically further cranking up the pressure for them to cut spending and increase taxes just to try to keep up with repayments. The loans themselves are likely to be used to keep previous lenders at bay.⁴

‘This is not just about the capacity to pay for many countries but in fact essentially a question of justice,’ says Lidy Nacpil of the Asian People’s Movement on Debt and Development. ‘We are posing a fundamental question, and that is: “Why are we being made to pay for debt most of our people have not benefited from?”’⁵

Include everyone

Debt is a prism that reveals the kind of injustice that already existed in international economic relations before Covid-19 ➔



Debt is a prism that reveals the kind of injustice that already existed in international economic relations before Covid-19 came along to make things much worse

came along to make things much worse (to say nothing of the depredations of unfair trade rules, tax avoidance by transnational corporations, etc; see NI 524). It's a problem that seems intractable unless we apply notions of justice or what it means to be truly social to the inevitable negotiations of process. That is something we cannot lose sight of – in a world changed so far much for the worse by the pandemic – in the rush to 'normal'.

Yet the way ahead has never been clearer. US writer Rebecca Solnit has written: 'I have often thought that the wave of privatization that has characterized our neoliberal age began with the privatization of the human heart, the withdrawal from a sense of shared fate and social bonds. It is to be hoped that this shared experience of catastrophe will reverse the social bonds.'⁶

Social bonds do not mend in a vacuum, however. They have a chance when governance intervenes to value the active participation of everyone in society. Or as Indian intellectual Arundhati Roy puts it: 'We have to include everyone in the consideration of what justice looks like.'

Our current economic system rewards those who live off wealth disproportionately compared to those who live off work. It is designed to funnel the maximum financial reward to those who already have the most, usually gained from the labour and productivity of those who have the least. In July a group

of super-rich individuals called, in an open letter, on their governments 'to raise taxes on people like us. Immediately. Substantially. Permanently.' Aware that the pandemic is predicted to push half a billion more people into dire poverty, they added: 'The problems caused by, and revealed by, Covid-19 can't be solved with charity, no matter how generous. Government leaders must take the responsibility for raising the funds we need and spending them fairly.' The letter ends: 'So please. Tax us. Tax us. Tax us. It is the right choice. It is the only choice. Humanity is more important than our money.'⁷

Later that same month the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) urged the introduction of a six-month, temporary basic income scheme for the world's poorest 2.7 billion people, who are not covered by any social-welfare programmes, in order to slow the surge of Covid-19 cases. Modest cash transfers would allow people to meet their basic needs, even if unable to work. According to the UNDP: 'This is not a finance story but rather a human story. This measure could be seen as a "Marshall plan", but not for countries or businesses, but rather for people.'⁸

Calls for the introduction of basic incomes (not just temporary), wealth redistribution by taxing the rich, investing again in public services and public goods and strengthening them, protecting workers' rights, and greater government intervention in the economy, have come, even from some surprisingly conservative quarters, ever since it became evident that a pandemic was upon us. Calls for international solidarity were fewer but came not just from the radical Left but also important international institutions. What is required has, thus, been clear from the start and it was the opposite of what the neoliberal consensus had been dictating for the past four decades with such crap results.

But, as Filipino academic and activist Walden Bello points out, significant change for the better will come about only when there is a synergy between two elements: 'an objective one, meaning a systemic crisis, and a subjective one, that is the people's psychological response to it'.⁹

Covid-19 has so far only widened inequalities, both within and between countries. Will the greater social sense the crisis has provoked lead us to demand change to that? Or will we say, 'Back to normal asap, just as we were before'? Could welcome government interventions – at least in some wealthier countries – to protect jobs and rescue industry be made to leverage more control in terms of labour conditions, what gets produced and curb executive pay packets? Can we demand that any recovery be based on the principle of sustainability, of living better on less, on more equal shares for all, on a focus on the essential rather than growth-based overconsumption which is killing the planet? Can we demand that in the time of economic shrinkage that is upon us?

All roads lead back to fairness, justice, vision – concepts that have had no place in our economic and financial systems for too long. ●

¹ UNCTAD, 'UN calls for \$2.5 trillion coronavirus crisis package for developing countries', 30 March 2020, nin.tl/UN-call ² UNCTAD, 'Covid-19 is a matter of life and debt, global deal needed', 23 April 2020, nin.tl/covid-debt ³ Manfred Stamer, 'Emerging markets: capital outflows...', Euler Hermes Global, 5 May 2020, nin.tl/outflow ⁴ Jubilee Debt Campaign, 'IMF loans bailing out private lenders during the Covid-19 crisis', July 2020, nin.tl/bailouts ⁵ 350.org webinar, 30 June 2020, nin.tl/our-future ⁶ Rebecca Solnit, 'The impossible has already happened', *The Guardian*, 7 April 2020, nin.tl/Solnit ⁷ 7millionairesforhumanity.com ⁸ UNDP, 'Temporary Basic Income', 23 July 2020, nin.tl/TBI ⁹ Walden Bello, 'The race to replace a dying neoliberalism', *Foreign Policy In Focus*, 13 May 2020, nin.tl/Bello

Above left: The packed huddle of Rocinha favela, clumped just beyond the skyscrapers in Rio De Janeiro's South Zone, Brazil. An astounding 100,000 people are crammed into an 1.4 square-kilometre area.

THOMAS HAENSGEN/ALAMY

Below left: A car cleaner in Monrovia, Liberia. Informal workers have been hardest hit by lockdown measures.

TOMMY E TRENCHARD/ALAMY

CAN WORKERS RESET THE SYSTEM?

Coronavirus has closed factories and workshops across the world, spelling disaster for millions of people who subsist on poverty wages. Tansy Hoskins reimagines a garment industry where workers are better protected.

The city of Tirupur in Tamil Nadu is known as the knitting capital of India. Thousands of garment factories, which make clothes for the domestic market and for export, co-exist with garment districts full of homeworkers. Some workshops just stitch on buttons, other households snip loose threads before pressing and packaging clothes ready for sale. With its sewing machines rattling through the day, textile agents going from house to house, rickshaw drivers blowing their horns, and children running underfoot, Tirupur is known as a busy industrial city.

The signs that something was not right began in January 2020. Homeworkers – always sensitive to the slightest shift in domestic and global markets – found that both contracts and access to raw materials had begun to reduce. By March, there was no work whatsoever.

The once bustling streets of Tirupur fell silent.

‘Homeworkers expected things were going to get worse, but nobody expected this,’ explained Janhavi Dave, International Co-ordinator of HomeNet South Asia, at the end of June. ‘We saw the absolute shutting down of supply chains. No work. That’s it. Period.’ For families who subsist on poverty wages at the best of times, the Covid-19 global shutdown has spelt disaster.

It is a story that can be told a billion times over. In supply chains and workplaces across the globe, work has slowed

or shuddered to a halt. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) estimates 300 million jobs in formal sectors of employment are at risk and up to 1.6 billion informal workers face destitution.

To compound this misery further, there is growing evidence that governments and businesses around the world are taking advantage of the Covid-19 crisis to advance an anti-workers’ rights agenda.

‘Historically, the costs of any crisis have always been borne by the working class, and the Covid-19 pandemic is no different,’ explains Nandita Shivakumar at the Asia Floor Wage Alliance. She notes a worrying trend in the garment trade: governments, backed by industry, seeking sweeping reforms to labour laws. ‘There’s a deep fear that these changes, which dismantle existing provisions (including minimum-wage legislation) won through long working-class struggles, will be rushed through without consultation.’

Research by the ITUC finds that labour violations have reached a seven-year high, with Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt and Honduras ranked as the worst offenders. In Cambodia, where garment factory owners are calling for cuts to the hard-fought minimum wage, trade unionists have already been fired and arrested for speaking out.

With the virus forcing millions of people to choose between going to work and getting sick, or staying at home to

starve, the Journal of Risk Research foresees a rise in ‘modern slavery conditions’, especially as ongoing demand for the manufacture of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is leading to governments dropping due diligence measures such as audit inspections that are meant to better regulate manufacturing supply chains.

This dire situation is no unfortunate coincidence. Brands and retailers have made billions in profit by paying workers a pittance and removing their ability to save for emergencies such as this one, while minimizing company tax contributions. This punishing economic system has ‘constrained the ability of states in the Global South to spend on social goods and worker welfare measures (like public healthcare or employment generation), during a crisis like Covid-19,’ explains Nandita Shivakumar.

Islands of progress

Sharon Burrows is the General Secretary of the ITUC, based in Brussels. ‘It has,’ she says, ‘been shocking to see the division between those corporations that guaranteed 90 days of employment, respected paid sick leave and paid for contractual commitments and those that couldn’t – or wouldn’t – use operating reserves.’

The Worker Rights Consortium published a list of fashion brands which made no commitment to pay in full for orders.¹ After a global public campaign, the list (as of July) still included Arcadia, 



TOP ROW RIGHT: WORLD BANK PHOTO COLLECTION
ALL OTHER PHOTOS: ILO

GAP, Walmart and Primark. In the UK, ultra-fast-fashion brand Boohoo has once again come under scrutiny, this time for using exploitative supplier factories in Leicester, which suffered a renewed peak in infection, during the pandemic.

In addition, Sharon Burrows says Covid-19 has exposed the cracks in corporate resilience – in the same way that banks were exposed during the 2008 financial crisis. Covid-19 proved to be the final nail in the coffin for high-street staples Oasis and Warehouse, whose online business was sold off to Boohoo. ‘Workers must not pay for this crisis,’ Sharon Burrows continues, proposing job creation and patient debt models to help the industry recover.

Among the chaos, there have been pockets of success. At the end of March, the South African Clothing and Textile Workers’ Union (SACTWU) brokered an agreement to guarantee six weeks of full pay for 80,000 workers as the country went into lockdown.

In the US, Seattle City Council passed emergency legislation to require app-based companies such as Uber and Lyft to pay their workers a form of sick pay, based on the number of days they worked for the company and the amount they had earned. This was seen as a big step in the broader fight to classify freelance ‘gig workers’ as proper employees.

Workers also sometimes proved better than governments at organizing the relief effort. In Dharavi – a sprawling township embedded within the Indian city of Mumbai – communities of informal workers came together to support each other as almost all home-based workers, domestic workers, street vendors, micro-factory workers, garment workers and ragpickers found themselves out of work.

Janhavi Dave describes how women homeworkers suddenly found themselves on the frontline of the Covid-19 response, organizing everything from dishing out food aid to negotiating access to toilets, with the support of the Labour Education and Research Network (LEARN). Food rations arriving haphazardly in shops had to be fairly distributed, social distancing in queues had to

be organized, migrant workers who did not qualify for rations had to be fed, and families in total crisis had to be found and nursed back to health.

Dharavi has purpose-built toilet blocks, designed to be clean and safe and to serve entire neighbourhoods. But during lockdown, police patrols were stopping people from leaving their houses. ‘You can’t just have brute force,’ Janhavi says. ‘One needs to be an insider to understand the practicality of it,’ explaining how workers grouped together to get their basic rights to access the toilet reinstated.

‘A government wouldn’t know this was happening, only locals would know,’ she continues. ‘Decentralization of any implementation plan is extremely important, community organizing is important, power to the people is important.’

System reset

‘I don’t think we want to go back to the “before” but we need to see the Covid-19 crisis as an opportunity to “reset” the system,’ says Nandita Shivakumar.

This idea is echoed by Sharon Burrows, who says that the future has to be constructed on ‘a different set of foundations’. She believes recovery will

be more fairly distributed. Anton Marcus is the Joint Secretary of the Free Trade Zones & General Services Employees Union in Sri Lanka, where millions of garment workers earn \$84 a month or less. Marcus’s demand is that his members keep their jobs, are protected from the virus, and have their income ensured.

To do this, he says: ‘Brands and manufacturers should ensure a peaceful atmosphere at plant level by engaging in social dialogue with unions and ensuring workers’ satisfaction. At the same time,’ he continues, ‘there should be a social protection scheme with brands and suppliers contributing funds so that in any similar situation in future all will be protected.’

In informal supply chains, homeworkers are grouping together to form producer companies and co-operatives which can win contracts to make PPE. This is not to paint too rosy a picture – HomeNet South Asia covers around 900,000 home-based workers, and Janhavi estimates that not more than 9,000 of them have work. But those who do have work are collectivized and winning solid contracts, such as an order to make a national supply of PPE masks from the King of Bhutan.

As the foundations of the world economy shake, Janhavi says it is time to reimagine work and workspaces for all of us. In homes, community centres and factories over the coming months and years, billions of people will struggle to regain their footing. Whatever happens,

the world will not recover without the full participation and empowerment of the people whose daily labour keeps us all fed and clothed and safe.

Speaking from her home office in Bangalore, Janhavi emphasizes a mantra from the homeworkers movement: ‘There is a slogan that we have,’ she concludes. ‘*Nothing for us, without us.* Don’t offer or plan anything without our participation or voice.’ ●

TANSY HOSKINS IS A JOURNALIST AND AUTHOR. HER LATEST BOOK *FOOT WORK - WHAT YOUR SHOES ARE DOING TO THE WORLD* IS OUT NOW.

1 Worker Rights Consortium, nin.tl/Covid-19Tracker

There are pockets of success. A South African union brokered an agreement to guarantee six weeks of full pay for 80,000 workers as the country went into lockdown

be the most difficult period for the global economy in generations.

‘We must ensure that democracy and rights with decent work and social protection are at the centre of that recovery,’ Sharon Burrows explains. ‘We need to build a resilient global economy, on the foundation of a New Social Contract: a new commitment to workers’ rights, renewed investment in compliance and the rule of law, a business model that serves people and workplace democracy with secure jobs and adequately funded health, education and care.’

In practical terms, the demands of trade unions seeking to protect their workers are fully achievable if resources

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SAFEGUARDING WITHOUT SNOOPING

A public-health emergency requires a degree of monitoring people. All the more reason to be especially vigilant on privacy, argues Nick Dowson.



Be quick and go home,' commanded the robot voice. A four-wheeled, chunky black box covered with police logos and cameras had been interrogating a man on a largely empty Tunis street about his reasons for being outside during Tunisia's coronavirus lockdown earlier this year.¹

Anyone approached had to display their ID to an officer controlling the machine remotely.

This robo-cop was one of the quirkiest technological responses to coronavirus, some of which have had significant successes.

After South Korea saw a spike in the disease early this May, linked to Seoul nightclubs, officials used credit-card data,

GPS tracking and video surveillance as well as records from the clubs themselves to track down more than 45,000 people. Such aggressive contact tracing has been central to keeping a lid on the virus, even without 'stay at home' measures.

But as governments and private companies seek to collect broad and intrusive data on citizens, we should also beware of the risks.

As lockdowns spread, contact-tracing apps proliferated, hailed as a way to help stop the virus – even as many countries failed to implement the WHO's recommended test, trace and isolate approach.

Many were quick to jump to experimental technology in place of tried-and-tested 'analogue' solutions. Traditional

public-health responses, such as human contact tracers, were ignored.

Digital surveillance was not limited to contact tracing. Poland required those in quarantine to take daily selfies via a coronavirus app to prove compliance with stay-at-home orders.² The UAE and Turkey took similar approaches.

Data's dark side

Responding to coronavirus clearly requires new measures. But data collection and surveillance also bring massive dangers.

In South Korea the publishing of detailed information about cases led to public shaming and even homophobia.³

Detailed data about contacts between individuals could also be abused by

In many ways the pandemic is simply turbo-charging the already-expanding state-corporate data collection complex

governments seeking to build up pictures of social movements and crack down on protests.

Private data is lucrative for advertisers. In the case of our medical histories, it is also prized by health insurers who use it to decide how to price premiums – or when to deny cover.

The crisis is normalizing intrusive, Orwellian technologies like facial recognition – as in Moscow, where it was used with public CCTV to identify lockdown breakers.⁴ Facial recognition is foremost a technology for control by rulers and bosses. Witness, for example, accountancy giant PwC's move to use it to track staff absences from their home desks.⁵ It also tends to reinforce racial and other discrimination.

A coronavirus firewall

Good policies can help, by ensuring the collection of only the minimum amount of data needed for an effective Covid-19 response, with access to it strongly restricted.

Personal data thus collected could, for example, be restricted to local health agencies, with a ban on sharing with police and other government bodies, and deleted afterwards.

There is a question of trust here, too – advocacy group Access Now has argued that companies with a track record for facilitating human rights abuse should be excluded from data collection programmes.

Access Now also calls for any software used to be open source: its code made accessible, enabling transparency and allowing researchers to verify that data is secure.

Where and how our data is stored is also important: if it is being transmitted to a remote server, is the encryption strong enough to prevent unwanted access?

How policy and technological choices combine can be seen in different

approaches to contact-tracing apps.

While some countries looked to store all data in a central server, mobile operating system designers Apple and Google have pushed a more decentralized option. This offers more privacy protection as it does not automatically upload contacts by default.

But this also raises questions, with the two major companies – previously revealed to be part of US intelligence agencies' mass-surveillance scheme Prism – effectively dictating to democratic governments what form of contact-tracing apps they can use in their public-health response.

Hacking the system

Where safeguards are not in place there is another option: subversion.

When the Indian government made the Aarogya Setu contact-tracing app effectively compulsory (in a country where many do not own smartphones), one Bangalore software engineer hacked it so it could still flash the required green badge despite its tracking technologies being removed.

Recognizing the tension between privacy and public interest here and not wanting to undermine efforts to isolate the virus, he only shared it with close friends.

Artists have experimented with make-up and fashion accessories that disrupt facial recognition. And for protesters in the UK, newly widespread mask-wearing has effectively suspended previous police efforts to ban face coverings as part of protest surveillance.

In many ways the pandemic is simply turbo-charging the already-expanding state-corporate data collection complex.

From Gmail to Facebook, major companies already hold data giving detailed insights into our lives and relationships; smartphones add location history. Now they want to cash in on expanded online learning and healthcare.

Using open-source programs – think Firefox, LibreOffice, Linux – or online services run by trustworthy non-corporates (Wikimedia, Riseup) can help: they offer transparency about what they do with our data and often increased privacy protections.

However, getting away from social technologies like Facebook is a taller order for many.

Overall we need to bring vital digital infrastructure under democratic control – decentralizing it where possible, ensuring transparency of data use and also looking to both regulation and forms of public and community ownership.

The pandemic has demonstrated that our digital infrastructure, vital this year for communication, work and organizing under lockdown, is too important to be left in the hands of billionaires.

Neither should we let it become a tool for authoritarian leaders to centralize monitoring of populations that goes beyond Orwell's wildest nightmares: tracking devices not just in every room but in every pocket. ●

NICK DOWSON IS A WRITER AND INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST WHO HAS COVERED TOPICS INCLUDING HEALTH, TECHNOLOGY AND POWER, HOUSING, TRANSPORT AND THE ENVIRONMENT.

¹ Rana Jawad, 'Coronavirus: Tunisia deploys police robot on lockdown patrol', BBC News, 3 April 2020, nln.tl/Tunisia-robot ² Caitlin O'Kane, 'Poland is making quarantined citizens use a selfie app...', CBS News, 23 March 2020, nln.tl/Poland-selfie ³ Steven Borowiec, 'How South Korea's nightclub outbreak...', *Time*, 14 May 2020, nln.tl/SK-shaming ⁴ Sarah Rainsford, 'Coronavirus: Russia uses facial recognition to tackle Covid-19', BBC News, 4 April 2020, nln.tl/Russia-tech ⁵ Michael O'Dwyer, 'PwC readies facial recognition to monitor traders at home', *The Telegraph*, 16 June 2020, nln.tl/pwc-privacy

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COUNTRY PROFILE

A sign on an empty building in the West Bank city of Hebron declares, 'this land was stolen by Arabs'. The notice was hung there by the Jewish residents of a nearby settlement, but similar signs proliferate across the region – Hebrew designations supplanting Arabic place names along the freeway to Jerusalem or maps that give illegal settlements equal prominence to historic Palestinian towns. It is against such efforts to abrogate the existence of a place called Palestine – and of Palestinians themselves – that the fragmented entity now known as the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) has struggled to assert its statehood.

One hundred years ago, the British government was sent a receipt by its first High Commissioner for the territory to acknowledge that he had been mandated 'one Palestine, complete'. The handover

reflected one of many colonial betrayals of Arab aspirations to independence that saw Palestine's territorial integrity dismantled over the following century. The 1917 Balfour Declaration had vouched British support for 'the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people' – a goal realized in 1948 with the declaration of the state of Israel.

PALESTINE

The 'Nakba' ('catastrophe'), as this event is known among Palestinians, marked the beginning of a continuing project of dispossession. Over 700,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled from their homes, with the ensuing Arab-Israeli war forging

modern political faultlines in the region. At its conclusion, the 1949 'Green Line' laid down the borders between Israel and the West Bank and Gaza Strip, dividing Jerusalem. A concurrent UN resolution affirmed the right of displaced Palestinians to 'return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours'.

Many Palestinians can still show you the rusting iron house keys they have retained as emblems of this right, though Israel's invasion of territories across the Green Line in the 1967 Six Day War further dashed such prospects. Another generation was driven into exile as Israel cemented its occupation. Its curfews, routine raids, detentions, land-grabs and housing demolitions have amounted to a system of daily abuse and degradation for Palestinians, with some 1.5 million displaced to refugee camps in neighbouring



states, the West Bank and Gaza.

It was in such camps that the seeds of the first Intifada or ‘uprising’ were sown in 1987. The means of resistance were various, from mass civil disobedience to stone-throwing youths, but it was diplomatic pressure that finally brought Israel to the negotiating table in 1991. The Oslo agreement saw Israel agree to a gradual withdrawal from the OPT and establishment of the Palestinian Authority with a view to a two-state solution.

The decades since Oslo – which have seen continued expansion of illegal settlements, accelerating land confiscation and property destruction, proliferating checkpoints, a second and bloodier Intifada, three large-scale military offensives in Gaza and construction of an illegal separation wall – have left little room for either diplomacy or Palestinian sovereignty.

Today, the so-called ‘deal of the century’ being touted as a peace plan by US President Trump looks like anything but a bargain, with Israeli PM Netanyahu's proposal to annex up to 30 per cent of the West Bank arguably the biggest threat to statehood Palestine has faced yet.

Palestinians may be more frustrated and dispirited than ever, but they are far from surrender. The global coronavirus pandemic saw them take to Twitter with characteristic black humour in messages such as ‘Dear World – how is the lockdown? Gaza’. Decades of occupation and *de facto* apartheid have made *sumud* or ‘steadfast perseverance’ among the most celebrated national traits. One can only hope Palestinians will retain a land on which a rich and historic culture can be practised beyond the terms of mere survival. ●

ZOE HOLMAN

AT A GLANCE

LEADER: Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian National Authority (PA). Ismail Haniyeh heads the Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip.

ECONOMY: GNI per capita \$3,710 (Jordan \$10,050, Israel \$40,930).

Monetary unit: New Israeli Shekel. The Jordanian Dinar is also used in trading.

Main exports: Building materials, iron, furniture, plastics, vegetable and olive oil.

Palestine's export regime is governed by restrictions imposed by Israel and the country remains its main trading partner. Palestine's economy remains heavily reliant on international aid while Israeli land restrictions in the West Bank cut its GDP by an estimated \$3.4 billion per year.

PEOPLE: West Bank and Gaza Strip: 5 million.

Population annual growth rate: 2.41%. People per square kilometre: 794 (UK 271). Gaza is one of the world's most densely populated polities.

HEALTH: Infant mortality: 17 per 1,000 live births (Jordan 14, Israel 3). Maternal mortality per 100,000 live births: 27 (Jordan 46, Israel 3). While overall HIV prevalence rates are undocumented, the high mortality rate among HIV-positive



patients is of serious concern.

ENVIRONMENT: Palestine's unique and productive environment has been neglected under the PA and more seriously jeopardized by the Israeli occupation through land confiscation and settlement-building, depletion of water resources, denial of access to agricultural lands, displacement and rapid population growth, wastewater pollution and desertification.

RELIGION: The majority of Palestine's population is Sunni Muslim (93%), with a sizeable Christian minority (6%) and smaller Ahmadiyya, Druze and Samaritan communities. Most Arab Jews relinquished their Palestinian identity with the founding of the state of Israel.

LANGUAGE: Arabic (Levantine dialect) is Palestine's native language, with small pockets of Aramaic, Samaritan and other minorities. English is widely spoken, while migration and illegal settlement have brought Hebrew and other languages to the West Bank.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX: 0.690, 119th of 189 countries (Jordan 0.723, Israel 0.906).

Photos (clockwise from top left): Palestinian activist Ahd Tamini is depicted on the ‘separation wall’ – she was imprisoned after slapping an Israeli soldier; the entrance to ‘The Walled Off Hotel’, a project set up and financed by the artist Banksy; a giant key symbol, referring to homes lost by Palestinians, marks the entrance to Aina refugee camp; packing olive oil for export at the Canaan fair-trade organic processing plant; 11-year-old Rehan helps with the family's olive harvest in Anine village. JENNY MATTHEWS/PANOS

STAR RATINGS



INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★☆☆☆

Poverty in Palestine is on the rise, with rates increasing by more than 10 per cent over the past decade. Some 14% of West Bank Palestinians and 52% of Gazans live below the poverty line, and the pandemic is forecast to inflate these ratios to 30% and 64%. Around one quarter overall live in a state of food insecurity.



LITERACY ★★★★★

Palestine has one of the highest literacy rates in the world, at more than 96%. Education has served as a major source of empowerment, with literacy up by 10% since the 1990s. But Palestine's education system is floundering, largely from the effects of occupation.



LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★★★

74 years (Jordan 74, Israel 83).



POSITION OF WOMEN ★★☆☆☆

Despite the social visibility of Palestinian women and girls, there is a vast disparity when it comes to their formal rights and equality (access to abortion, for example, remains illegal). Occupation and humanitarian crises have exacerbated existing gender inequalities.



FREEDOM ★☆☆☆☆

Palestinians as a population are subject to severe restrictions on freedom of movement, political organizing and access to religious worship, as well as routine assault, political detention and unrelenting surveillance by Israeli security forces.



SEXUAL MINORITIES ★★☆☆☆

LGBTQI communities in Palestine bear the brunt of social and religious conservatism with no form of legal protection (in fact, retrograde British Mandate laws still applied in Gaza criminalize male same-sex activity.)



POLITICS ★★☆☆☆

Politics in the OPT remains shackled to Israel. The increasingly repressive rule of the Islamist Hamas party that seized control of Gaza in 2007, alongside corruption and collaboration by Fatah leaders in the West Bank, have redoubled the burdens of occupation. Even before the current radical annexation plan, the PA has severely limited administrative control over the occupied West Bank, swathes of which remain under Israeli jurisdiction.

★★★★★ Excellent

★★★★☆ Good

★★★☆☆ Fair

★★☆☆☆ Poor

★☆☆☆☆ Appalling

MINIK WALLE NOWHERE MAN

Smith Sound, Cape York,
northwestern Greenland



'I lived in a little igloo
with my father.'



'My mother was dead and I
had no brothers or sisters.'

'And so I loved my
dear father very much,
and he loved me.'

'We play hide-and-seek
over the snow
in the winter.'

'We hide behind
the big pieces of ice.'



'But we always
have to watch, or
the bears might
come and catch us.'



'We have always
four boys together,
so some can call if
the bears come;

'One boy is never alone.'



'The bears are white,

'like the ice,

'and we do not see them,

'and they come softly.'

These people
are much like
children...

... and
should be
treated as
such

Robert Peary ('Piuli')

US Navy officer Robert Edwin Peary dealt a profitable sideline in Arctic furs, narwhal and walrus tusks, which he acquired in trade with the Inuit (then referred to as 'Eskimos'), in exchange for coffee, biscuits and candy. One of Peary's regular hunters and dog drivers was Minik's father, Qisuk.



'I can remember very well when the big ship came there where I lived. I had never seen anything bigger than my father's kayak.'

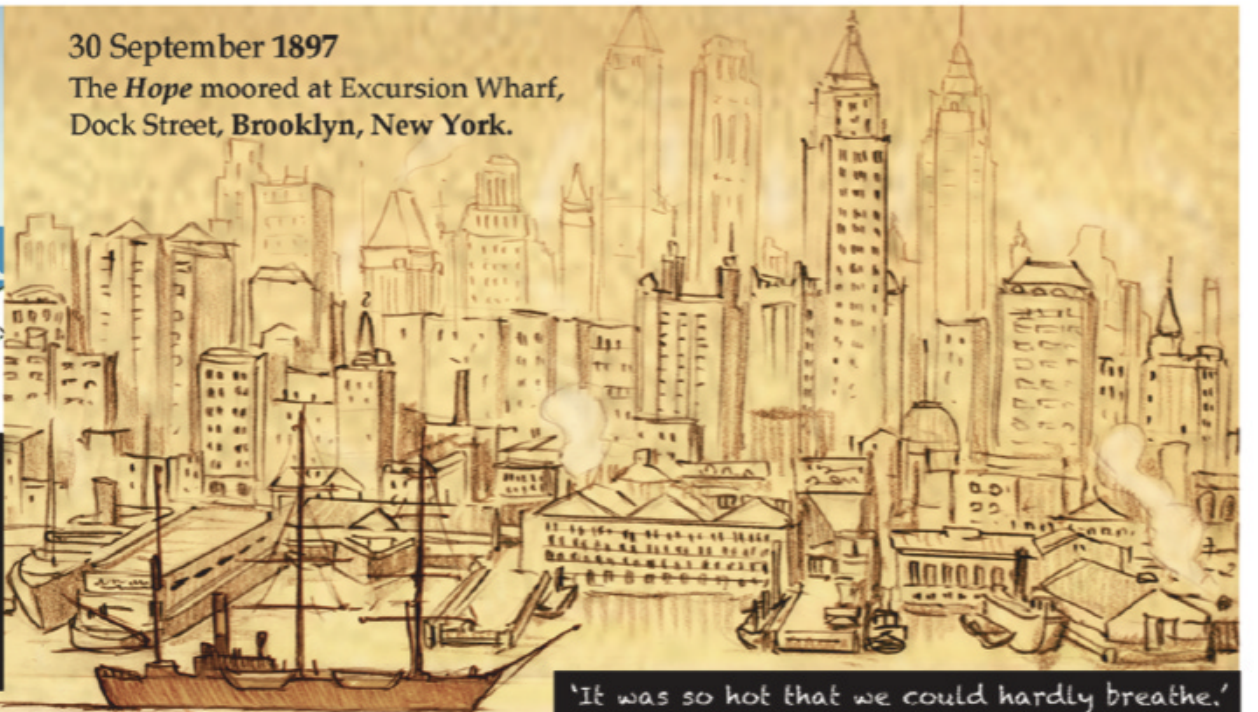
'We helped them, and the men got
knives and pieces of board as pay.
A wooden plank is one of the most
valuable things we can get.'



'Lieut. Peary asked if some of us
wouldn't like to go back with him,
promising we should be back within
a year, with a great stock of guns
and ammunition, and presents for
the women and children. So one day
we all sailed away for New York.'

30 September 1897

The *Hope* moored at Excursion Wharf,
Dock Street, Brooklyn, New York.



'It was so hot that we could hardly breathe.'



Nuktaq, the eldest, 'incredibly strong'. **Atangana**, his wife, a powerful shaman. **Aviaq**, their adopted daughter, aged 12. A young man, **Uisaakassak**. **Qisuk**, aka 'The Smiler', also a powerful shaman. And his son, **Minik** – about 7 years old.

Peary, obsessed with being first to reach the North Pole, had claimed the **Cape York meteorite** – a rare source of iron for the Inuit – as his own. He'd brought it to America as a fundraising exhibit. In the first two days alone 30,000 visitors paid to see it, alongside six 'real live Eskimos'. 'The children are sick from the quantity of sweet things given them,' a ship's officer reported. 'We feed them raw meat, and the candy has a bad effect on them.'

The year prior, new diseases from outsiders had killed 31, a tenth of **Minik's** tribe – his mother, **Mannik**, among them.



'When they took us ashore, they brought five big barrels. These held the bones of our people who had died. I'd seen them digging them out of their graves to bring them here.'

'Oh, I can remember it very well, that day when we first saw the big houses and saw so many people and heard the bells on the cars.'



'It was like a land that we thought must be heaven.'

'And the people. Yes, there are so many of them that when smoke rises from the chimneys, clouds fill the sky and the sun is eclipsed.'



A single building on any city block housed more people than where they'd come from: in numbers unlike anything they had ever known...

'If I hadn't had a white person looking after me, I'd have been stepped on just like a mosquito.'

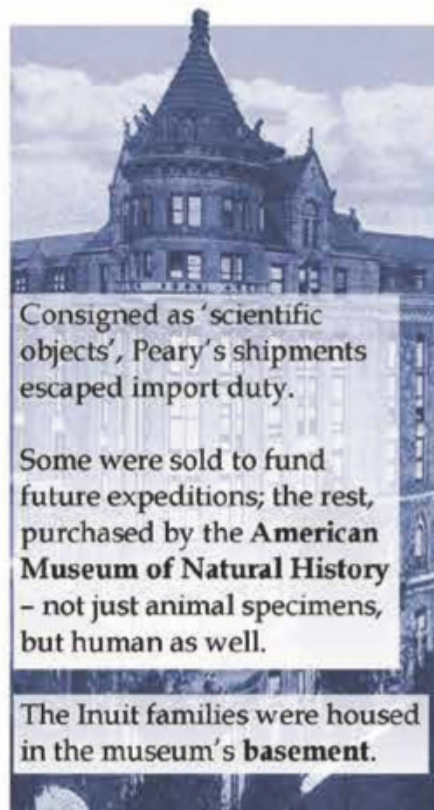
Uisaakassak: 'People lived up in the air like auks on a bird cliff.'

'The houses are as big as icebergs on a glacial bank, and they stretch inland as far as you can see, like a steep chain of mountains with innumerable canyons that serve as roads.'

'Streetcars, big as houses, with masses of glass windows as transparent as freshwater ice.'

'They raced on without dogs to haul them, without smoke..'

'... and full of smiling people who had no fear of their fate.'



Consigned as 'scientific objects', Peary's shipments escaped import duty.

Some were sold to fund future expeditions; the rest, purchased by the **American Museum of Natural History** – not just animal specimens, but human as well.

The Inuit families were housed in the museum's **basement**.

'The unusual crowd that thronged the museum was disappointed when told the Eskimos were not on display.'

'Several scores of visitors received permission from **Superintendent Wallace** of the museum to inspect the newcomers.'



Museum president, **Morris Ketchum Jesup**

William Wallace

New Yorkers?

Gawkers!

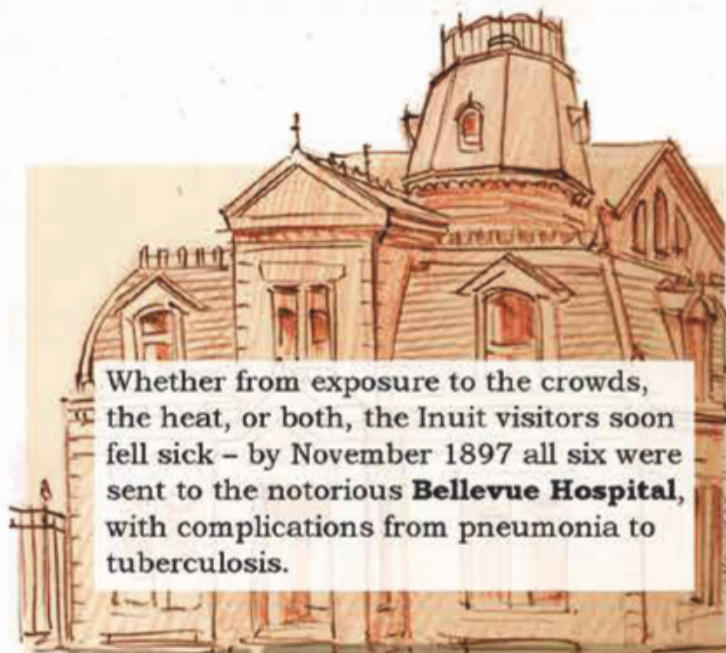


'They had to content themselves with looking through the grating, and many lay prone, peering through, in the hope of catching a glimpse of the Eskimos.'

'**Qisuk's** little son was happy in the possession of a knickerbocker suit, which he took great delight in exhibiting to the callers, his chubby, greasy little face beaming with delight at his civilized appearance.'

– *New York Times*, 11 October 1897





Whether from exposure to the crowds, the heat, or both, the Inuit visitors soon fell sick – by November 1897 all six were sent to the notorious **Bellevue Hospital**, with complications from pneumonia to tuberculosis.

'One of the most amusing forms of entertainment consisted in the manner in which the Eskimos attempt to conjure away illness.



'This in their opinion can only be accomplished by rubbing the sides of the body and singing a weird sort of lullaby that with all its peculiarities is not absolutely discordant.



< In this place, the *angakkoq* has no power, because there are no *toorngat* >

'Minik... became as great a pet in his ward as the little girl Aviaq was in hers.' – *New York Tribune*, 8 Jan 1898



Angakkoq – shaman; Toorngat – helping spirits.

'Our disease and suffering and lack of understanding of all the strange things... you can imagine how closely that brought us together.'



'Hopelessly far from home, we grew to depend on one another.'

'Every morning my poor father would come and sit beside me until I wakened, almost crazy to know how I felt, and yet too tender to arouse me from my rest.'



'How he would smile if I was a little better, and how he would sob, with big tears in his eyes, when I was suffering.'

'He took me in his arms and kissed me and said in Eskimo:'



< Minik must be careful for his father's sake >

Letter from Bellevue to Anthropologist Dr Franz Boas, 17 Feb 1898:

'I hardly believe Qisuk will survive the night. The body will I suppose belong to the Museum of Natural History or Mr. Peary and they can of course do anything they wish with it.'



'He nearly suffocated during the night, and cried out for his home, his family, his friends and me.'

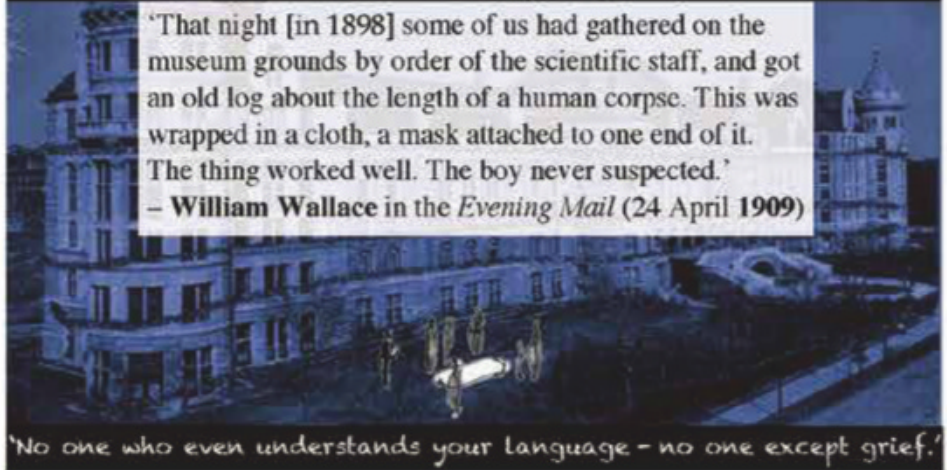


'I put my head under a pillow, crying hard. The strain was too great for him. The next morning my father was dead.'

'He was dearer to me than anything else in the world.'

'That night [in 1898] some of us had gathered on the museum grounds by order of the scientific staff, and got an old log about the length of a human corpse. This was wrapped in a cloth, a mask attached to one end of it. The thing worked well. The boy never suspected.'

– William Wallace in the *Evening Mail* (24 April 1909)



'No one who even understands your language – no one except grief.'

Atangana died 16 March. The remaining Inuit were sent upstate, to the Wallace dairy farm in Lawyersville.



Nuktaq died 14 May, then Aviaq. Their bodies went to the farm's macerating plant. 'We were only acting under instructions from museum authorities. It had been arranged that the bones should be prepared for exhibition and they had to be cleaned.'

– William Wallace

The only survivors, Uisaakassak departed for Greenland, 2 July, while Minik went to live with the Wallaces – William, his wife Rhetta, and their 11-year-old son, Willie.

NIGHT
EDITION

The

EVENING EDITION

World.

BASEBALL
and RACING

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"Circulation Books Open to All."

NEW YORK, FRIDAY, APRIL 25, 1909.

"Circulation Books Open to All."

PRICE ONE CENT.

TAMING A LITTLE SAVAGE

An experiment, and a promising one, in the effects of civilization upon one of the least known aboriginal races. An Insider report by Clark Lane.

'Little Mene', as he is called, is being educated by Mr. and Mrs. Wallace, with a view of sending him as a missionary to his people. "I have learned to read and write and to know grammar and fractions and lots of other things," says the young fellow. "When I get to be a man I want to be a farmer. All Eskimaux love to grow things because in our country nothing grows. We think it is fine to see a tree or a bush or a flower."

Mr. Wallace works at the American Museum of Natural History: Mene visits often. He can go to the Eskimaux exhibit, identify every article that Lieut. Peary brought down with him and tell the history and even the names of the stuffed Eskimo dogs. He has a reputation as quite the fisherman, for he catches fish from the stream with his bare hands and eats them raw on the spot. Asked if he did not get cold, playing hide-and-seek among the icebergs in the dreary region that was his barren Arctic habitat, Mene.

replies that only his cheeks got cold, but that he often feels very cold in New York. "I am going back north," he says, "and be a chief like my father."



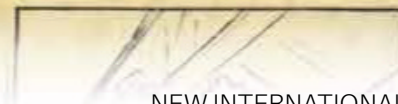
Mrs. Jesup wished to see the results of the experiment as to what civilization could do for such a child. He attends the Reformed Church. "What did they do with you in Sunday-school, Mene?" "They took my five cents." Mr. Wallace believes it does a young man good to express his own thoughts, even imperfectly.

MONEY GONE AND ALONE.

SHE DETERMINED TO DIE.

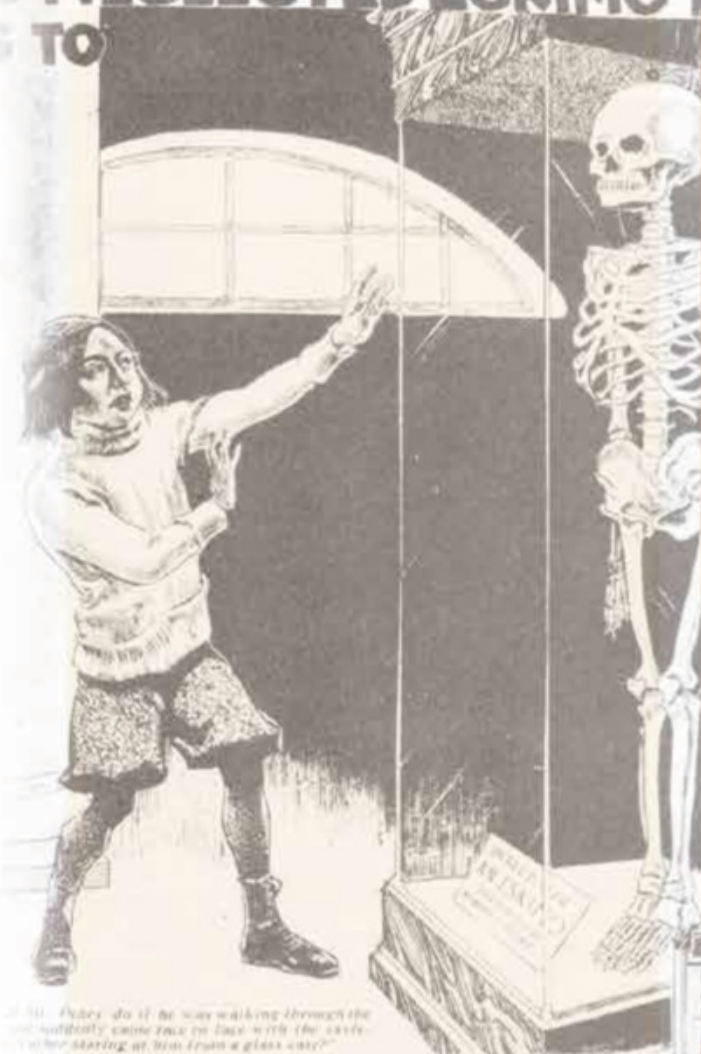
BASEBALL GATES NOT

TO OPEN



NEW INTERNATIONALIST

THE NEGLECTED ESKIMO BOY



Almost a decade had passed when Minik learned the awful truth. As he tells it, on a visit to the museum to study the various animals on display there:

'I went from case to case, looking at the teeth of the exhibits. Unexpectedly I came face to face with it... a box containing a skeleton and bearing a label which read: "The Skeleton of Qisuk, a Polar Eskimo." My heart began to pound and I was trembling. I felt as though I must die then and there. I threw myself at the bottom of the glass case and prayed and wept.'

— Minik, *San Francisco Examiner*, 9 May 1909



In this one detail the reality was more prosaic. 'The newspapers had found out (about) the bones. They printed stories about the skeletons.'

— Wallace, *Evening Mail*, 21 April 1909.

Minik, made aware from teasing at school, simply couldn't contain himself any longer.

Various authorities had contested his father's remains. 'Disposition of the body: it was agreed that students at Bellevue should make such use of it as possible in the dissecting room, and that the skeleton should then be mounted and preserved in the Museum of Natural History.'

— *New York Daily Tribune*, 19 February 1898

Qisuk's brain was preserved in fluid at the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

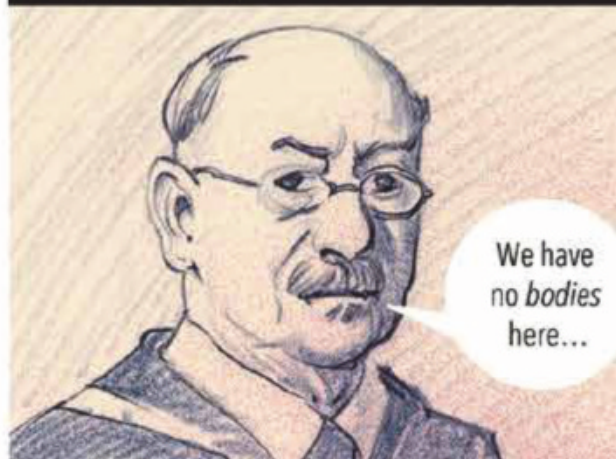


'Casts of their heads have been made for the museum' — Franz Boas. Family and friends, reduced to 'bones, brains, anthropological notes and plaster casts', scattered to the four winds...

'The corpses turned over for very interesting dissections added much to our knowledge on ethnological subjects. Best of all, up in Manhattan Square, savants who wish to study Esquimaux anatomy may do so quite comfortably, in the Osteological Department. And that is where the bones of Minik's father, nicely articulated, are now.'

'There, too, is his precious kayak, his boat of skins — his gun and his knife and his Esquimaux clothes, a most interesting exhibit. Minik thinks that, according to the American laws of inheritance, these things ought to be his.' — *World*, 6 Jan 1907

'I asked Dr. Hermon Carey Bumpus, the museum's director, for my late father's bones, and he told me first he didn't know where they were. Then he said I could not have them for they belonged to the museum. I tried many times, but it was no use.'



'... If these things happened, they were before I came here as director. We have hundreds of skeletons, and I do not even know that the one he wants is here now. Those Eskimos were wards of the United States, and whatever was done for them here was done out of pure generosity. That is all I know of the matter.'

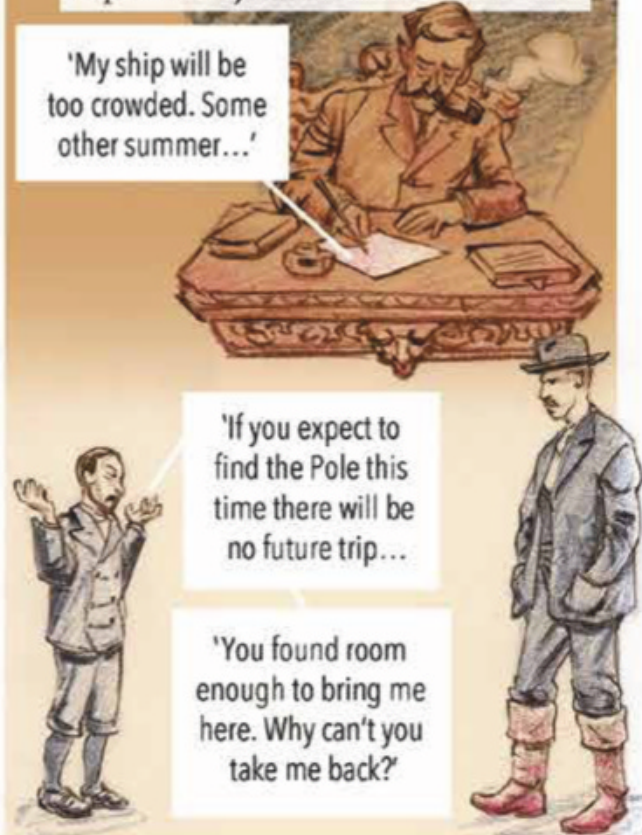
— Professor Bumpus, (a zoologist)

'After that he was never the same boy. He became morbid and restless. Often we would find him sitting crying. Sometimes he would not speak for days. His heart was broken. He had lost faith in the new people he had come among.' — William Wallace



Minik, in correspondence with Peary, requested to join his next venture north.

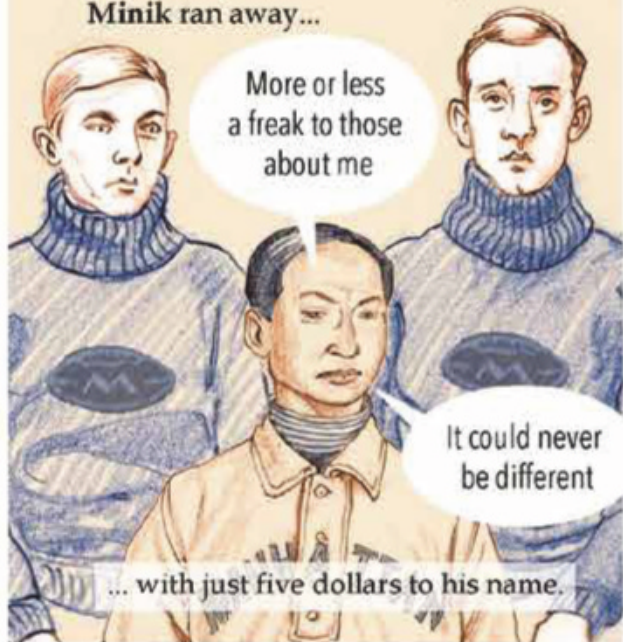
'My ship will be too crowded. Some other summer...'



'They had used me for what they wanted. Nobody cared what became of me. I was a curiosity, that's all.'



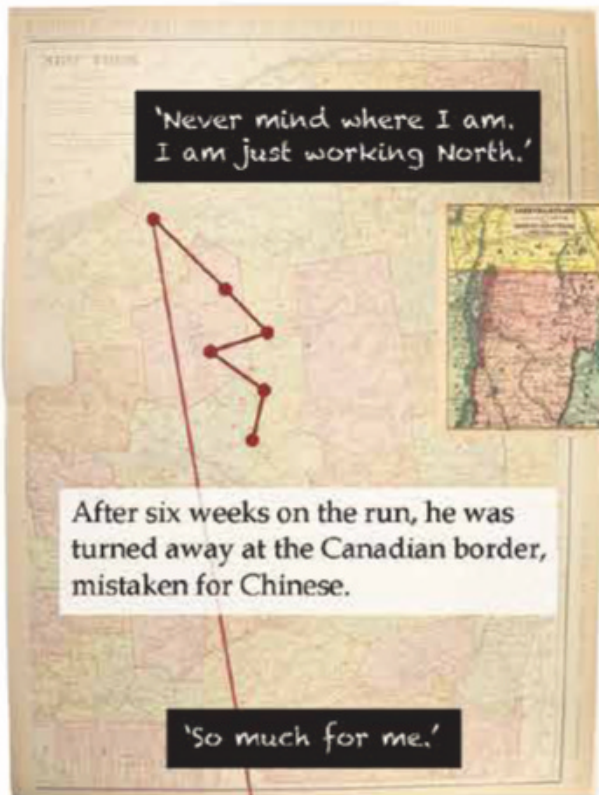
His enrolment at Manhattan College cut short by another bout of pneumonia, Minik ran away...



More or less a freak to those about me

It could never be different

... with just five dollars to his name.



'Never mind where I am. I am just working North.'

After six weeks on the run, he was turned away at the Canadian border, mistaken for Chinese.

'So much for me.'



'I am homesick and disgusted.'

'Civilized men steal, and murder, and torture and pray and say, "Science". My poor people don't know that the meteorite that they used till Peary took it fell off a star. But they know that the hungry must be fed, and cold men warmed, and helpless people cared for, and they do it.'

'I gave up believing that your Christian belief which was taught me was meant for a poor Eskimo.'



10 July 1909. Minik departs on the Red Cross Line steamer, *Rosalind*.

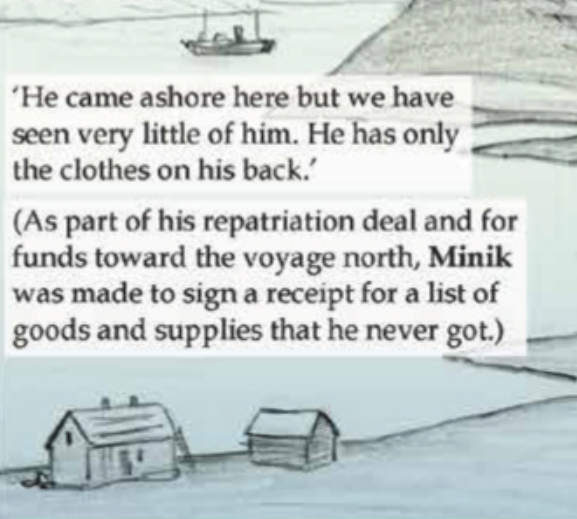


Held over, three weeks in St. John's before the *Jeanie* left for Greenland, he 'smoked cigarettes, played billiards and drank brandy neat, along with other evidences of higher education.'

– *New York Herald*.

The grand experiment was a success!

Greenland.



'He came ashore here but we have seen very little of him. He has only the clothes on his back.'

(As part of his repatriation deal and for funds toward the voyage north, Minik was made to sign a receipt for a list of goods and supplies that he never got.)

'He has completely forgotten his language. Minik was now a "qallunaq", a white man.' Still... 'Through signs, smiles and gestures of friendship, they welcomed him home.'

– Eyewitness reports.

Home in this case was a tent, with a relative, Soqqaq, 'the best dog breeder in the north' – an old man, lame in both arms.



'It's like rotting in a cellar to go back there after living in a civilized country... it leaves me between two extremes, where it would seem that I can get nowhere.'

San Francisco Examiner, 9 May 1909 – 'One day he borrowed Soqqaq's team of powerful black dogs and left inland to hunt for caribou. He was gone for several days, alone with his thoughts in his homeland, a land almost as foreign to him now as New York City had been to him as a child.'



'I have no friend here or anywhere.'

'I am lonely, lonely.'

'He has been in America since he was seven, and even though he is unfit here, it is probable that his life has made him equally unfit for that environment. He will be literally a boy not without a country, but without a place on Earth.'

Minik Wallace, c.1890-1918 (having returned to the United States, he died working in a lumber camp in Pittsburg, NH, from Spanish Flu)



A GREEN RECOVERY



Calling for a green economic recovery from Covid-19 near the British Parliament.

WIKTOR SZYMANOWICZ/NURPHOTO/PA IMAGES

Many economies are now facing their worst downturn in more than a generation. Administrations across the world have agreed on Covid-19 financial rescue packages, designed to keep economies afloat in the short-term, including a stimulus package of more than \$2 trillion from the federal government in the US and many hundreds of billions more from across the Eurozone and G20. While some of the bailout money has gone directly to people who've lost jobs and income because of the pandemic, critics have warned that much of it is simply a transfer of wealth from the public purse to the corporate world, including the world's worst polluters. Capitalism loves disaster.

These short-term fixes to our economic woes could have long-term impacts on our ability to combat climate change. Government economic recovery plans will either set us on a pathway to limit the warming of the Earth to below 1.5°C, or smash through an already low carbon ceiling from which there is no return.

It's terrifying stuff, but climate activists have been finding ways to mobilize. In the US, a collection of youth groups, including the International Indigenous

Youth Council and Sunrise Movement, took their activism digital on Earth Day, in April, to demand a People's Bailout. Across 72 hours, digital performances and talks were organized to highlight community building, storytelling, divestment, climate financing and political engagement. These were complemented by hundreds of local livestreams to connect organizers, skill up, and invite discussion on movement building, climate justice and racial injustice, to name a few. Among demands focusing on meeting people's economic and health needs, the diverse coalition behind the events is calling for a rejection of corporate bailouts for fossil-fuel executives driving the climate crisis. This push complements pressure exerted on the US congress by over 300 organizations, for the legislative body to ensure polluters don't get a single cent of bailout cash.

Meanwhile, in Britain, climate action charity Possible teamed up with the legal team at Leigh Day solicitors to warn the British Chancellor that government bailout support for airlines could be unlawful on climate grounds. In the wake of passenger numbers plummeting,

airlines have faced a monumental fiscal challenge and have requested hundreds of millions in government loans and support. As global aviation is a major contributor to greenhouse-gas emissions, campaigners are keen to ensure strict environmental and climate conditions, and protection of workers, are enmeshed in any rescue packages.

In South Korea, a coalition of green groups including Gyeongnam Korean Federation for Environmental Movements opposed the State's financial support for Doosan Heavy Industries & Construction Co., which builds coal-fired power plants. The coalition sought a legal injunction to block financial assistance totalling over \$800m, though the corporation has since secured further government assistance.

A coalition of 265 civic society groups called on Chinese authorities to guarantee that Covid-19 financial relief will not bail out fossil-fuel, mining and infrastructure projects in the Belt and Road programme. The organizations, hailing from countries ranging from Bulgaria to Ghana and Brazil to Uzbekistan, urge that projects must adhere to strict environmental and social conditions.

Understanding the poignancy of the current moment, climate campaigners are trying to set the world on a distinctly different pathway and put an end to the fossil-fuel extractivist economy responsible for devastating communities around the world and the artificially induced heating of the Earth. Supporting efforts that challenge bailouts and stimulus for the world's polluters is vital if we are to stand any chance of ensuring climate breakdown doesn't run away from us. ●

JAKE WOODIER IS A CLIMATE ORGANIZER, WRITER, AND CO-EDITOR AT RED PEPPER MAGAZINE.

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VIEW FROM AFRICA

The mask mandate and personal freedom

An interesting thing has been happening in the US, where simply asking people to wear masks in order to reduce the spread of Covid-19 has turned into a hot debate about personal freedom. In late June, voters in Florida county testified before their local council that making masks mandatory in public places was not just an affront to their personal freedom, but antithetical to the entire founding premise of the country. They were adamant and loud, which in the US's current political climate doubles up as justification. The debate about the mask mandate has gone all the way to top of government, where President Donald Trump has been forced to backtrack somewhat on his previously adamant refusal to wear a mask, even in situations where it was required for everyone else – for example during an April visit to a healthcare centre in Maine.

Kenya, like many other African countries, has made wearing masks in public mandatory, but unlike the US the debate is not about personal freedoms, but the behaviour of the police, who have a long

history of brutality against civilians. Since the beginning of a nationwide lockdown in April, the police have killed 15 people in extra-judicial executions while ostensibly enforcing government Covid-19 directives, including the wearing of masks. The country has a history of disproportionately violent policing against young people in informal settlements, and the majority of those killed so far fit this demographic. A number of people from these neighbourhoods have also been unjustly detained and fined as the police have taken the mask mandate as an opportunity to expand their reign of terror.

The debate around masks is just one of the many ways the Covid-19 pandemic is forcing everyone to go back to the fundamentals of politics and society, to the ideas developed by philosophers like John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau that humans are born free in nature but have to cede certain freedoms in order to live in organized society. The simple idea at the centre of living in a society is that we are generally better off together than alone in the forest at the mercy of animals. But we have to make some sacrifices in order to make the system work. Living in a society is a constant balancing act between personal freedoms and public obligations, which must be continually adjusted in light of new information and developments.

But citizens and governments around the world seem to have lost sight of the basics and are stuck in meaningless, cyclical debates. It serves no public interest for

citizens to use their personal freedom to jeopardize their own and other people's safety. But, similarly, it serves no-one's interests for the government to use violence to inflict irreparable harm on citizens in the name of public health. Let's get back to a sober debate about working together to navigate this unprecedented time in global history. ●

NANJALA NYABOLA IS A POLITICAL ANALYST BASED IN NAIROBI, KENYA. SHE IS THE AUTHOR OF *DIGITAL DEMOCRACY, ANALOGUE POLITICS: HOW THE INTERNET ERA IS TRANSFORMING KENYA* (ZED BOOKS) AND *TRAVELLING WHILE BLACK: ESSAYS INSPIRED BY A LIFE OF TRAVEL* (HURST).



ILLUSTRATION: KATE COPELAND

BIG BAD WORLD



Flavia Mutamutega

Being Rwanda's sole agony aunt for adolescent girls is a role Flavia Mutamutega cherishes. She talks to Veronique Mistiaen about how life prepared her for it, the questions she gets asked and her belief in young people.

Photo: Craven Mupenda/Girl Effect

Flavia Mutamutega is Baza Shangazi, literally 'ask auntie' in Kinyarwanda, the national language. She works as part of Ni Nyampinga, a hugely popular multi-media youth platform launched by international non-profit Girl Effect in 2011, made up of a magazine, radio show, a network of ambassadors and clubs, and digital platforms.

Prior to working as an agony aunt, Flavia worked as a secondary-school teacher, a translator and a Child Participation Officer for UNICEF and for the Ministry of Health.

Isn't being the only Baza Shangazi a big job for just one person?

It is a big role, mainly in terms of what it means to young girls. It helps them connect to someone they can talk to and trust.

As Rwanda is trying to develop, people no longer live as large families with a grandmother, aunties and siblings – all in the same compound. Many parents are trying to make ends meet and have no time to sit with their children and talk to them. Also, because of our history [the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi], there are many orphans, many children who grew up by themselves.¹

But in any case, the culture in Rwanda, especially in rural areas [where the majority of the population lives], is that we don't talk about puberty, body changes and sexuality. Parents don't talk openly about these issues. So this is the role of Baza Shangazi: to be a trusted person who gives them information to help keep safe and encourage them to make informed decisions and be self-confident.

You are Baza Shangazi on the radio,

in magazines and online, but don't use your real name or photo. Why is that?

Girls don't know me as a person, but as a voice. If a girl felt she could trust me because of my face, that wouldn't have any meaning. If we were to put a photo in a magazine, girls may not identify with the image or it may distract them from really listening to the advice. The girl knows auntie only through her voice, so she can visualize her in her own mind. Everyone has an image of who auntie is – and it is an auntie they can relate to.

What drew you to this work – is there something in your life that prepared you for this?

When I grew up, I had a male cousin I was close to. We did everything together:

older girl took me under her wing. We shared a bag in the dorm where we put our clothes and things. I noticed that when some items disappeared from our bag, she wouldn't let me shower with her. Then I discovered why and she told me about menstruation. I've been lucky to have an older sister who let me discover this, so when my periods came, I was not surprised, but other girls had not been told. Their skirts got stained and you could read the shame on their faces, so I decided that I would tell girls what to expect. I studied communication, so I could do that better. When I started working as a teacher and later at UNICEF, I never missed a chance to talk to young people about reproductive health and changes in the body.

Our responses seek to make every young person feel proud of who they are, regardless of their sexuality, feelings and choices

looking after cattle, getting water from the well, gathering wood – everything except washing dishes, he was never asked to do that! Later, when I was a bit older, perhaps 10, I realized that my mother kept me closer to her. When my cousin was fetching wood, I couldn't go. My mother was worried and said: 'Don't let anyone disturb you', but she didn't explain what she meant and it made me feel uneasy. Then at boarding school, an

What is it to be an adolescent girl in Rwanda today? What type of questions do they ask you?

There are lots of things girls are curious about and want to know.

Younger girls mostly ask about how to deal with bodily changes and friendships. For example: 'I am 12 and my periods haven't started yet, am I OK? Why do my friends have breasts and not me?' Or 'Why is the person I want to be friends



THE INTERVIEW

with not considering me? How can I be integrated in this circle of friends?' They ask these small things, but they mean a lot to them.

Older girls ask about sexuality, pregnancy, gender-based violence, HIV, education and gender barriers. For example: 'My father is selling the land. He consulted my brother but not me; Look, auntie, there is this boy who asked me to meet him and he locked the door and raped me; I love him but when we are together he doesn't show any sign that he loves me but only wants to have sex; I've met this older man and he gives me money to have sex; My periods haven't come for three months. What do I do?; Can I be infected [with HIV] if there was no blood transferred during sex?'

Do you receive many messages? How do you process and handle the questions, particularly the difficult ones?

We [the team at Ni Nyampinga] get hundreds of messages a day from girls aged 10 to 19 from all over the country, even the most remote parts. We get messages from boys too, who ask about

relationships and sexuality and want to know why we don't have a radio show or a section in our magazines for them too.

We go through all the messages and sort out the ones we need to respond to immediately.

We group the questions dealing with general knowledge by themes and respond to them as clusters in the magazine or on the radio show. We reply to their questions, but we also take the opportunity to give them more information around the issue they are asking about.

If the message is urgent, like a gender-based violence issue for example, the girl will receive a reply on her phone within 24 hours. We'll tell her not to keep the incident secret, but report it to a trusted adult, seek medical attention if needed, and we direct her to toll-free numbers for support and services. We also address some of these issues in our magazine articles, radio shows and dramas, so more girls can learn about them.

Our responses seek to make every young person feel proud of who they are, regardless of their sexuality, feelings and choices.

What do you like the most about your job?

To feel the relief of a girl or boy who has got an answer to their problem. Even if it's not face to face, you can feel it. I get feedback from girls saying: 'I don't know what I would have done without you.' Or messages from parents saying things like: 'Before, my daughter didn't dare to ask for [sanitary] pads. Now she asks for money and, because of your talk show, I don't ask what she needs it for.'

My job makes me feel closer to young people. Being a parent in Rwanda doesn't apply only to your children. In every young person, I see my child. I think many people feel that way, even if they don't say it, because there are so many young people in our country who need care, guidance and support to thrive. ●

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¹ According to the UN, 'More than one million people – overwhelmingly Tutsi, but also moderate Hutu, Twa and others who opposed the genocide – were systematically killed in less than three months.'

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VIEW FROM BRAZIL

In times of Covid-19, blacks die twice in Brazil

João Pedro Matos Pinto was a 14-year-old black boy. On 18 May, he was playing with his cousins when the house in São Gonçalo, Rio de Janeiro state, was invaded by police. He was killed by a rifle shot that pierced his body from stomach to shoulder. The police claimed they were chasing suspects, but his family say the story is false. Community leaders counted 72 bullet holes in the house. João's father said he only got good marks at school.

João Pedro is one of the many Brazilian George Floyds.

Black people accounted for 55 per cent of the country's population, but more than 75 per cent of those killed in police operations between 2017 and 2018, according to the 2019 Yearbook of the Brazilian Public Safety Forum. Whites are around 44 per cent of the population but account for less than a quarter of victims of police killings. In Rio de Janeiro, black 21-year-olds are 147 per cent more likely to be killed by police than the rest of the population.

At the same time, the majority of Brazilians killed by Covid-19 are black. A survey commissioned by *Época* magazine

shows that 61 per cent of the 54,488 victims who had died of the disease by the end of June, and whose colour was identified, were black.

The problem is not genetic. It is related to lack of basic sanitation, food insecurity and difficulty in accessing medical care. Poverty is not colour-blind. By being more lethal to black and poor people, the pandemic parallels police violence statistics in cities like Rio de Janeiro.

There are no direct government orders to shoot black and poor people. But security forces are trained to defend the property and quality of life of those who live in the 'postcard' parts of major Brazilian cities while 'containing' those who don't. Rio de Janeiro Governor Wilson Witzel and President Jair Bolsonaro openly advocate that officers should not be held accountable for killings during police operations. This encourages them to shoot first and ask questions later.

Before the pandemic, Brazil's black and poor population were already experiencing a massacre in the suburbs at the hands of drug traffickers and paramilitaries, as well as official police and military forces. Covid-19 made things worse, helped by Bolsonaro's denial of its danger and lack of public policy responses to it.

This fits perfectly with what Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe calls 'necropolitics' – where a government believes it can decide who lives and who dies. In Brazil, the government not only believes this; it actually makes those decisions.

Two days after João Pedro's death, an 18-year-old black man called João Vitor



ILLUSTRATION: KATE COPELAND

was killed by police in Rio's City of God – a district world famous for the movie of that name.

It happened while volunteers were distributing food to alleviate the suffering caused by Covid-19. The police accuse the dead young man of being a criminal. But he will never be able to tell his version of events.

Following these cases, Brazil's Supreme Court banned police operations in *favelas* during the pandemic. But videos show that poor blacks are still victims of police brutality, leaving no doubt that there is a long way to go in the fight against the structural racism that defines us as a nation. ●

LEONARDO SAKAMOTO IS A POLITICAL SCIENTIST AND JOURNALIST BASED IN SÃO PAULO. HE IS A CAMPAIGNER WITH THE INVESTIGATIVE NGO REPÓRTER BRASIL, WHICH HE ESTABLISHED IN 2001.

Thoughts from a Broad

Kate Evans



On the pink corridor

How trans women in Honduras are helping their imprisoned sisters. Frauke Decoodt reports from Tegucigalpa.

Brithany and Nicolle live in Honduras, one of the worst places to be trans women – at least 111 transgender people have been killed since 2009. But the two have something else in common. They both spent time in a prison containing some 7,000 male inmates. Listening to their stories of how they negotiated their lives in prison and on the outside, it became evident that the threat of violence never recedes.

Surviving the streets

I first met Nicolle in 2018, not long after her release from prison, at the offices of Arcoiris, an organization defending LGBTQI+ rights. Today, she looks different, with her hair in braids, in high heels and make-up. She now speaks in a hoarse whisper, because last November she was stabbed in the throat. Other trans women I met at Arcoiris have since been killed, like Bessy in July 2019, or have fled, like Paola, who escaped to Europe in January 2020 after an assassination attempt. Killed or attacked because they are activists denouncing crimes against their community, or for engaging in sex work.

When I first met Nicolle, she swore she would never do sex work but now necessity has forced her into it. ‘I hate it!’ she says. ‘Sometimes I earn close to nothing, but I need to pay rent and buy food.’ She made better money before going to prison, selling drugs for a street gang. Gangs often coerce trans women to work for them. Nicolle soon got arrested

for possession of marijuana. She was beaten while being driven around by the police for several hours, later sentenced and sent to Tamara Penitentiary for three years. She was 24 years old.

Nicolle is not an exception. Honduras is a conservative Christian country where many consider *machismo* a virtue. This explains the constant discrimination and violence the LGBTQI+ community faces. Many trans people cannot find ‘normal’ work and are rejected by their families. Crime and sex work become the only options left for many trans women, with prison sometimes the next step. ‘There are so many things in this trans life that started with transphobia and homophobia,’ sighs Nicolle.

But it is not every trans person’s story. Brithany has the support of a loving family and chose sex work voluntarily. ‘I tried it out of curiosity,’ she says. ‘I placed an announcement on the internet.’ While she didn’t do much sex work, the experience determined her life. ‘This curiosity is what got me locked up. My underage neighbour also did some sex work. She asked me if I could help her with placing an announcement. Ignorant of the consequences, I did, and got sentenced to 10 years.’

Prison economics

Five years later, Brithany is 28 and out on parole. She is required to return to prison at weekends.

We meet at Arcoiris. She looks like the girl next door, dressed plainly with

minimal make-up. She is convinced that she can get me inside the penitentiary to observe life on the LGBTQI+ corridor. The director has done her that favour before. Nicolle wants to come along to bring some basic necessities for the girls there. Both Brithany and Nicolle stress how much such visits from Arcoiris meant to them while they were inside. ‘It made us feel like somebody cared. It broke the monotony,’ Nicolle explains. Since her release from prison, she has only managed to go four times.

A few days later we stand in front of the penitentiary gates with three garbage bags full of supplies: items like toothpaste, toilet paper, soap, condoms, beans and rice. Apart from basic and disgusting prison meals, ‘everything costs money inside,’ says Nicolle. ‘Many trans women don’t have families that visit them so they do sex work [inside prison] to make some money. They get paid less than on the streets.’ Three years into her jail term Brithany started doing some sex work. Nicolle chose a boyfriend who helped her out. ‘Several of us got HIV [in jail],’ says Nicolle. ‘But you have to be really sick to be taken to the health service.’ Unsurprisingly, the health service doesn’t provide

Right top: Nicolle takes a break on the terrace of the Arcoiris office.

Right bottom: A trans sex worker takes to the mean streets of Tegucigalpa.

FRAUKE DECOODT





hormone treatments either. ‘Somebody inside sells it to us,’ Brithany clarifies.

Identity - erased and re-affirmed

It’s a lengthy wait at the entrance gates with our bin bags full of stuff. Prison guards and heavily armed military police look disdainfully at Brithany and Nicolle. Nobody gets in as the director is in a meeting, maybe about the following day’s declaration that will stop all visits due to Covid-19.

After two hours and an extended security check, we get in. Both Nicolle and Brithany remember being terrified when they first set foot inside Tamara Penitentiary – Nicolle started her jail term in December 2014, seven months before Brithany. They were taken to the LGBTQI+ corridor with both inmates and guards shouting abuse at them. The corridor is about 1.5 metres wide and 15 metres long, lined with small cells that sleep two in a bunk bed, something of

a privilege in a prison accommodating around 7,000 inmates in a space intended for 1,700. During her time Brithany had the corridor painted pink, hung up a rainbow flag, and lobbied for a television. The pink corridor is in a block called La Isla (The Island) with corridors for prisoners with mental and physical disabilities, for chronically sick inmates, and for ‘the gays’, a label to which all diversity in the LGBTQI+ corridor is reduced.

On the girls’ first day in La Isla their hair was cut off. Other ways of erasing their identity included not being allowed to wear women’s clothes on visiting days and having to take showers alongside men. What pains the girls even more is that it’s prisoners who make these rules, that it was another trans woman who cut their hair. She was the LGTBQI+ corridor’s co-ordinator. ‘She enjoyed humiliating us,’ Nicolle remembers. ‘She once beat someone so badly, they moved her to a maximum security facility.’ Nicolle,

Brithany and Nicolle en route to Tamara Penitentiary.

FRAUKE DECOODT

and then Brithany, became the next co-ordinators.

Twenty against thousands

Guards rarely venture inside Honduran prisons, leaving prisoners to sort themselves out. In practice this means the gangs are in control. These gangs co-opt the co-ordinators of every aisle, block and building, who ensure the numerous written and unwritten rules are respected. The power of the co-ordinators is indisputable; they check fights and riots which nonetheless often occur. Last year, 57 inmates died during prison riots in Honduras. LGBTQI+ inmates feel especially vulnerable. ‘During a riot anybody can come and kill you,’ Nicolle explains. ‘Imagine the constant state of

When Nicolle became co-ordinator, she told residents of her corridor to keep their heads down. ‘If one of us makes problems, all of us pay’

fear we feel, 20 of us against thousands of inmates.’ When Nicolle became co-ordinator, she told residents of her corridor to keep their heads down. ‘If one of us makes problems, all of us pay.’

This attitude explains why none of the women in the ‘pink aisle’ mention any complaints about the prison to me. They talk in general about the lack of freedom, resources and visits, and their hopes of not making the same mistakes again. They say nothing about the discrimination and violence they suffer. I’m reminded of Nicolle’s words: ‘In prison, no-one talks freely.’ One message the girls often repeat stands out though: ‘We’re all prisoners here. If we respect, we get respect.’

That golden rule was also mentioned by the lead co-ordinator when he took me on a tour of the prison. ‘If they behave, we look after them, and we punish those that abuse them.’ Fear, and the need to coexist in an overcrowded jail, makes inmates obey; bothering the LGBTQI+ prisoners would cause problems. The need to maintain this delicate coexistence leaves trans women some room for negotiation. ‘As co-ordinator, I was able to get them to

let us grow our hair, wear more feminine clothes and get hormone treatment,’ Nicolle proudly recalls. But like peace, rules are fragile inside. Problems arose after Brithany left. Two cis-male co-ordinators took charge of the pink corridor and things took a turn for the worse.

Impact of the Covid-19 curfew

It’s three in the afternoon, time to go. Soon the guards will lock the buildings. We still have two hours on buses, back to the streets of Tegucigalpa. ‘It’s crazy to say, but outside we often feel more vulnerable,’ Nicolle asserts. ‘Even though in prison we’re at the mercy of the gangs, they also somehow support and protect us.’

Nicolle’s lack of confidence in the State to protect LGBTQI+ inmates is based on experience. The State is often a perpetrator of discrimination and violence against the LGBTQI+ community. Reporting abuses is considered useless and even dangerous in a country where 95 per cent of the murders of LGBTQI+ people remain unsolved – usually uninvestigated and with the culprits at large.

The Covid-19 emergency brings additional pressures. Although there has been

a clampdown on visits, there has been a major outbreak in Tamara. Several prisoners have died, hundreds are infected but healthcare is precarious.

‘I am very worried about the girls inside,’ says Nicolle. ‘It’s impossible to know how they are.’

But she is also worried about herself. Like so many others she has been unable to go out to work since 16 March due to the Covid-19 curfew and she is struggling. One trans woman who tried to go out was killed. Brithany, on the other hand, is relatively happy. She enjoys being with her family and making plans for the future. ‘I lost five years of my life [in prison]. I want to study, maybe set up a beauty salon.’ Both women, however, share one dream: setting up a support network for imprisoned trans persons. ‘I know what it feels like,’ says Brithany. ‘The need for love, family and resources. I will not let them down.’ ●

FRAUKE DECOODT HAS A PAST IN ANTHROPOLOGY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND ACTIVISM. SHE PREVIOUSLY LIVED IN HONDURAS AND GUATEMALA. HER PRINT AND PHOTOJOURNALISM FOCUS ON HOW PEOPLE CONFRONT VIOLENCE. FRAUKEDECOODT.ORG

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QUAKERS

‘The people want independence!’

The Covid-19 pandemic may have put Algeria’s revolutionary uprising temporarily on hold, but, as Hamza Hamouchene observes, the will to topple the military regime remains strong.



Since February 2019, the people of Algeria have waged an inspiring revolt against the country's military regime. Millions took to the streets united in their rejection of the ruling system, demanding radical democratic change. They chanted 'They must all go!' and 'The country is ours and we'll do what we wish' – two slogans that have become emblematic of this new Algerian revolution. The Hirak ('movement' in Arabic) succeeded in overthrowing President Abdelaziz Bouteflika in early April 2019 after six weeks of protests.

Weekly protests continued every Friday through the scorching summer. A student movement organized parallel demonstrations every Tuesday, adding to the momentum. Only in March 2020, with the Covid-19 pandemic forcing a lockdown, did this mass movement see a temporary halt.

The country has been in a political crisis for decades, particularly since the 1992 military coup that prevented the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) from winning the first multi-party elections since independence and the atrocious war on civilians that followed, killing an estimated 200,000. Though the roots of Algeria's problems lie in the colonial era, recent troubles are the result of a politics of parasitic accumulation and corruption: a military-oligarchy that denies people their sovereignty and benefits foreign and domestic capital. Recent events come at a time of economic crisis and suffocating austerity following the decline of oil and gas revenues, and infighting among the ruling factions.

Achievements

The Hirak has accomplished much. It forced the Military High Command (MHC) to distance itself from the president's coterie and effectively deposed Bouteflika after 20 years in power. It also prevented two elections: one in April

2019, in which the physically ailing president was running for a fifth term, and the second in July 2019, which the movement saw as a sham to maintain the primacy of the MHC.

The movement has seen through the manoeuvres of the regime, such as attempts to maintain Bouteflika in power and the manipulation of anti-corruption demands for political advantage, and responded with creative, flamboyant and radical slogans and tactics. For example, youth protesters obstructed presidential candidates' campaigns in various parts of the country by blocking access to their towns and disrupting meetings. When elections were finally held in December

and an end to corruption: 'You devoured the country... Oh you thieves!'

The movement's deeply anti-colonial politics and enduring unity, especially after the country's many years of civil strife, are also great achievements. The placards and chants showed the failure of the regime's attempts to sow division: 'Algerians are brothers and sisters, the people are united.' After decades of atomized opposition and silencing of dissent, the movement has raised political consciousness and brought determination to fight for radical democratic change. The taking back of public spaces has created a kind of agora where people debate and strategize and where art and music

Once-powerful individuals are in jail, including former prime ministers, chiefs of security services and the deposed president's brother

2019, they were actively boycotted through massive street protests and by shutting down electoral bureaux. After the installation of former prime minister Abdelmadjid Tebboune as president, the Hirak reasserted its demands: 'Tebboune is a bogus president. He was imposed by the army and has no legitimacy... The people were liberated and it's they who should decide... A civilian state now!'

When Tebboune announced in January that Algeria will be exploiting its shale gas potential, the people responded with 'You frack in Paris, not here!' – a reference to French transnationals like Total's interest in Algeria's shale resources.

High-profile oligarchs and once-powerful individuals are in jail, including former prime ministers, chiefs of security services and the deposed president's brother. This is a big achievement for the Hirak, though many felt the anti-corruption campaign was just a highly publicized smokescreen to create a false sense that the regime is changing. But none of it would have happened without the popular mobilizations and calls for accountability

flourish. The slogans signal a resolve to force the system to yield: 'The people want independence!', 'It's either us or you, we swear we are not stopping!'

From the ground up

Algeria has not witnessed such momentous events since independence from French colonial rule in 1962. People no longer accept the status quo, and the ruling class, despite its attempts at repression, is on the ropes.

It's not just a middle-class uprising either. People from marginalized neighbourhoods, unemployed youth and the working poor have all marched for freedom, voicing their indignation. '*Antouma Asbabna!*' they shout, 'You are responsible for our misery!'

Women have played an important role and have a strong presence in protests all over the country, including in conservative areas, and some feminist organizations are working to put women's liberation at the centre of this democratic revolution. On 8 March 2020, International Women's Day, Algerian women

Images from Algiers of the demonstrations marking the first anniversary of the Hirak, 22 February 2020, before the pandemic brought a halt to such mass gatherings. The cake proclaims that the regime (système) has to move (dégager), a popular slogan of the protests.

RIAD KACED

On International Women's Day, Algerian women chanted in the streets: 'We are not here to celebrate; we are here to uproot you!'

chanted in the streets: 'We are not here to celebrate; we are here to uproot you!'

The movement is spearheaded by youth and has no clear leaders or structures. Organizing is mainly horizontal and through social media; the general strike in the first few weeks that was instrumental in forcing Bouteflika's abdication followed anonymous calls for action on Facebook.

The participation of independent labour unions has been somewhat limited. Weakened considerably over the last few decades, their leaderships adopt reformist and sometimes accommodating positions towards the regime.

Despite such shortcomings, independent trade unions, particularly the combative ones in the health and education sectors, have staged their own strikes and marches in solidarity with the popular movement and to demand their rights as workers. Lawyers' and judges' associations gave their support by refusing to oversee the cancelled July 2019 elections.

However, Algeria's biggest trade union, the General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA), is affiliated with the regime and has played a reactionary role against workers' interests for decades. Emboldened by the uprising, some trade unionists attempted to re-appropriate it and remove its pro-regime leadership. They protested in several regions, forcing the general secretary Abdelmadjid Sidi Said to step down. His replacement, Salim Labatcha, however, is no better.

The counter-revolution

As with any revolution, counter-revolutionary forces have mobilized to block change. The counter-revolutionary campaign currently under way in Algeria draws support from abroad: regionally, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt are using their money and influence to halt potentially contagious waves of revolt in the region. At the global level, France, the US, UK, Canada, Russia and China, along with their major corporations, seeing a potential threat to their economic and

geostrategic interests, are all supportive of the Algerian regime.

Assaults on media channels have increased. All audio-visual and most print media, public and private, have been tamed. Just one TV channel has covered the protests, Al Magharibia, and it was suspended by the Paris-based European satellite provider Eutelsat at the request of the Algerian government and with the complicity of the French political establishment. Social-media campaigns led by an army of trolls have worked to spread pro-MHC disinformation and discredit the Hirak.

The army has not fired any bullets so far, but it has continued to justify various repressive measures. Since independence in 1962, Algeria has always been ruled by a military regime, directly or indirectly. The militarization of society has created a culture of fear and distrust. The brutal repression of past uprisings and the cruelty of the war in the 1990s explain the popular movement's reluctance to directly confront the army.

However, despite the MHC's rejection of every roadmap and appeal for genuine dialogue proposed by the movement, people remain determined to peacefully demilitarize their republic. They have been chanting: 'Generals to the dustbin and Algeria will be independent.' After Bouteflika's overthrow, demonstrations continued in opposition to the military, which has maintained *de facto* authority over the country. The movement remained at a stand-off with the Army Chief of Staff Gaid Salah until he suddenly died in December 2019. Gaid Salah, a staunch supporter of Bouteflika, was determined to preserve the military regime and status quo, doling out threats and accusations of treachery and foreign collusion against the opposition. From June 2019, he initiated a repressive campaign of arrests targeting more than 200 activists and figureheads of the Hirak. The slogans have never been clearer: 'A civilian not a military state,' 'A republic

not a military barrack,' 'Gaid Salah is with the traitors.' He has been replaced by General Chengriha, who has taken the mantle from his predecessor.

No going back

Entering into its second year, the Hirak could not topple the regime; likewise the regime could not exhaust the movement. Weekly protests came to a halt in mid-March 2020 due to the global pandemic. But the energy and dynamism of the movement has metamorphosed into health campaigns and solidarity actions for the most vulnerable in society during these difficult times. There have been several initiatives for cleaning up and disinfecting public spaces, caravans of solidarity to Blida, which was the pandemic's epicentre in the country, campaigns to raise awareness about the disease and other creative actions to keep the Hirak's flame alive.

Meanwhile, the authoritarian military regime is doubling down on the repression of journalists and activists. Many have been judicially harassed and jailed since the start of the lockdown, often for their social-media posts. New laws to further stifle dissent have been approved in order to criminalize actions that are deemed to 'undermine state security and national unity', accusations that have been levelled at many activists and journalists.

The Covid-19 pandemic has, in a way, been a blessing to the ruling classes in Algeria. But the movement is not finished: 'We are the descendants of Amirouche [anti-colonial national hero] and we will never go back.' If the regime thinks that it will bury the Hirak during the pandemic, it will need to think again. With an economic crisis looming, the struggle for democratization will be long and will go on. ●

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SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

*Highlighting the work of artists and
photographers from the Majority World*



A portrait of María Magdalena Reyes, a 60-year-old indigenous woman from Vaupés, part of the Colombian Amazon, who still works the land every day. It's from a series titled Inner Disruptions shot by Colombian documentary photographer and visual artist **Liliana Merizalde Gonzalez** which seeks to explore the strength and pain in her subjects' stories as a reflection of political, social and community situations. María Magdalena's life has been marked by the tragic deaths of those close to her at every stage and Gonzalez chose to extend her back with a great leaf to symbolize the process of her inner growth and ability to reinvent herself. Gonzalez describes herself as a 'photographer interested in identity, memory and territory issues linked to women and our strength'. lilianamerizalde.com



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Mothers of the revolution

In 2019, Sudanese strongman Omar al-Bashir was brought down in a revolution orchestrated largely by women. But while the dictator might have gone, the divisions wrought by his 30-year rule endure. We discover that for the women who campaigned against him, the revolution has only just begun.

Words: Lucy Provan and Alice Rowsome

Illustrations: Yasmin el-Nour and Duha Mohammed

On 8 April 2019 Alaa Salah, 22, is standing on top of a car in Khartoum, the Sudanese capital. She wears a white *tobe* – a traditional Sudanese dress – and gold moon-shaped earrings. With one hand in the air, she addresses the crowd:

‘These military men disfigured Islam. They imprisoned us in the name of religion, burned us in the name of religion... killed us in the name of religion. But Islam tells us to speak up and fight against tyrants... The bullet doesn’t kill. What kills is the silence of the people.’ Alaa demands the fall of Sudan’s dictator, Omar al-Bashir. The crowd cries back: ‘Revolution!’

Bashir had been in power since 1989, when he took control of the country in a bloodless military coup. Fundamental to the philosophy of his Islamic state was the idea that women are biologically programmed to care for the family, while men are built to provide and protect. Under Bashir, women’s treatment became a marker of Islamic legitimacy: their behaviours at home, work and in outdoor space were dictated by intrusive, highly discriminatory laws that were heavily policed. (See box overleaf.)

Three days after Alaa’s speech, Bashir’s

resignation was announced. It was the culmination of five months of country-wide demonstrations by hundreds of thousands of protesters – 70 per cent of whom were women – demanding civilian rule, ‘freedom, peace, and justice’.

The image of Alaa on top of the car went viral. International press celebrated it as the defining image of Sudan’s ‘women’s revolution’. Like North America’s Lady Liberty and the Marianne of the French Republic before her, Alaa’s image had become the symbol of a nation.

But, as Alaa herself stated afterwards, one Muslim Arab woman from Khartoum could not represent the breathtaking diversity of Sudan. Looking in at Alaa from the crowd were hundreds of silhouettes, their faces indistinguishable, pointing their smartphones at her. They were female politicians, students, housewives, union leaders, labourers, war refugees, communists and preachers of all religions and ages. These were the women who together helped to bring down Sudan’s strongman.

But while Bashir has gone, the damage and division wrought by his 30-year dictatorship is profound and enduring. We went to meet seven women who, in their unique ways, are working to bring a new Sudan into being. And discovered that for each of them, the revolution has only just begun.

MALAZ AND THE SCISSORS: THE PROTESTER

January 2020. As the sun sets, Malaz Jaffar Abdelkarim, 18, walks down the streets of Burri, near central Khartoum. Her hair is shockingly short. A passing woman stops: ‘What did they do to your hair?’ she asks, her eyes filling with tears.

A warren of unpaved lanes and mud-brick walls surrounds them. Malaz remembers being chased through these streets by government soldiers last year, mounted on pick-up trucks, which were known as ‘Thatchers’ after the former British Prime Minister’s toughness. Young protesters would run and duck into local homes; neighbourhood grandmothers disguised the fugitives, or helped them escape through windows.

Malaz had helped lead her local ‘resistance committee’ in Burri, a historically middle-class neighbourhood, where many had lost their livelihoods under Bashir. It was one of many youth-led groups that emerged across the country to co-ordinate the street protests that had first arisen from longstanding protests over bread prices.

Women like Malaz were key to the success of the revolution and lauded for their bravery. One teenage girl, dubbed ‘Teargas Hunter’, went viral for throwing

hot teargas canisters back at army tanks. Others built barricades and guarded checkpoints. Such was the ubiquity of their presence that anonymous security officials confirmed to US broadcaster CNN that their orders were to ‘break the girls, because if you break the girls, you break the men.’

Malaz was cornered by a security officer who grabbed her and cut off her long braids. The memory still feels raw and she starts crying as she recalls it. But she continued to protest and would go on to be detained 16 times, held in illicit detention centres, known as ghost houses. ‘It was freezing cold,’ she recalls. ‘They beat me with electrical cables. It’s the kind of thing you can’t forget or forgive.’ Malaz has vowed to keep her hair short until justice is served.

Heading to her local resistance committee meeting, Malaz passes the dusty square where her braids were violently cut. Young boys are playing football. The ball lands in front of Malaz. With an infectious smile, she gathers up her long loose yellow dress and kicks it back.

Despite women’s visible leadership, they have been sidelined in the formal political process since the revolution. After Bashir’s removal from office, the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) – an umbrella for revolutionary groups, civil society, unions, rebels and opposition political parties – agreed a plan with the military for the gradual transfer of power to civilian rule over the next three years. As part of this plan, an 11-strong Transitional Sovereign Council, made up of soldiers and civilians, was set up to rule Sudan until elections planned for 2022. Only two women sit on the Council.

Malaz’s resistance committee is following a similar trajectory: sitting outdoors in a circle of red plastic chairs, the meeting attendees are all male. It was organized at a time when most women are at home with their children. The committee is intent on holding the military to account, gathering testimonies of those attacked during the revolution. As Malaz enters, they are discussing their frustration with the slow transfer to civilian rule. She waits patiently to give her testimony. The mosque lights up, the *muezzin* calls for prayer. She only speaks for a couple of minutes before the men rush off.

JALILA AND THE NOTEBOOK: THE REBEL

A mother of five, Jalila Khamis Kuku is making *madida*, a fenugreek porridge often given to pregnant mothers, for her daughter, who sits nursing in the corner.

Jalila grew up in Kaneefa, a village in the Nuba Mountains on the border with South Sudan. The Nuba people are comprised of 50 or more diverse ethnic groups, a mix of Muslim, Christian and animist faiths, each with a distinct language. Growing up, Jalila remembers bringing in harvests and composing hunting songs with other young women. Now living in Khartoum, she teaches literacy to women who, like her, fled violence in their hometowns.

Present-day divisions in Sudan owe much to the legacy of colonialism. Over 57 years, the British colonial administration exploited existing animosities to ‘divide and rule’. The British invested in the predominantly Muslim-Arab North, while sidelining the predominantly Christian and animist African South. After independence in 1956, the British-built elite in northern Sudan held on to political and economic power, trying to assimilate the rest of the country by

force. This triggered a southern rebellion and two civil wars. The Nuba peoples sided with the rebel forces of the South fighting against Khartoum, and suffered tremendously as a consequence.

In the 1990s Bashir subjected the Nuba Mountains to almost daily aerial bombings. Rebel areas were sealed off from media and humanitarian relief. In 1992, Bashir declared a ‘jihad’ or Holy War against the rebels, a politicization of religion that was deeply resented by the women of the region. Paramilitary groups like the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) carried out systematic mass killings and raped with impunity. They were encouraged to attack civilians whose residents were suspected – often solely on the basis of their non-Arab ethnicity – of supporting rebels.

Though many in the Nuba Mountains identify with the South over the North, in 2011, the region was excluded from the referendum which would lead to the creation of South Sudan. Their area – home to most of the country’s oil – was forced to remain part of Sudan. By then, an estimated 1.4 million Nuba had been killed or injured by the military in an almost invisible war. The fighting continued.

Jalila fled to Khartoum and operated a secret cell of the southern rebel group,

MAP OF SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN



the SPLM-N. She also passed evidence of war crimes to Amnesty International and the International Criminal Court. In 2012, Jalila was put on death row, charged with ‘spreading false information’. In prison, she organized strikes against the forced labour of female prisoners and children. Eventually, the police threatened to harm her son, a threat that shook her to the core.

Online youth groups successfully campaigned for Jalila’s release in January 2013. She continued her activism despite government intimidation, under constant censorship and surveillance.

When Bashir stepped down in April 2019, Jalila was excited to finally speak freely about the war in the Nuba Mountains. When the military took control in Khartoum in the immediate aftermath of Bashir’s fall, Jalila stayed on with other protesters at a sit-in, to demand civilian rule.

Two months later, on 3 June, the RSF attacked the sit-in, replicating tactics used in the Nuba Mountains. Hundreds were injured and 120 killed. Some women, who chose to remain anonymous, have described being raped and whipped with electric cables by men in RSF uniform. ‘For one week I was unable to move,’ one recalls.

But the protesters prevailed. In August, a joint military-civilian Sovereign Council was formed to rule alongside a civilian prime minister. In September, the government appointed a national committee to investigate the assault on 3 June. Sudan’s attorney general is also investigating other historic abuses under Bashir. Jalila hopes their findings could push the Constitutional Court to lift the military’s immunity from prosecution.

Jalila is now gathering testimonies to submit to the 3 June Committee. For her, military accountability will be the test of whether this new government can be trusted.

‘This revolution was the revolution of the women. They were damaged by the high cost of living, the wars and the abuses of the state,’ she says. ‘I want to restore the right of all victims of violations in all of Sudan.’

But the odds are not in Jalila’s favour. Remnants of the defunct regime and the security authorities are still present. The seven-member investigations committee includes representatives of the Ministry of Defence and of the RSF, whose head, Mohamed Hamdan ‘Hemeti’ Dagolo, is

vice-president of the ruling Sovereign Council. ‘The deep state still exists,’ she observes.

Later that day, Jalila walks down Nile Street in a blue *tobe*, which wraps around her head and body. Trees, covered in dust, sweep down towards the ground as a sand storm, known locally as a *haboob*, smothers the city and local farmland.

Jalila sees a student sobbing at a mural, which depicts a portrait of a young man. She walks over and holds him firmly. Around them, hundreds of other murals commemorate those who died in the revolution. ‘His best friend was killed during the sit-in, along with so many others,’ she explains. ‘It’s a sad thing. There has been no justice.’

LINA AND THE NILE: THE CLIMATE CHANGE ACTIVIST

In the shallows of the River Nile, young people drink tea, take selfies and cool their feet in the water. Among them is 21-year-old Lina Yassin, a chemical engineering graduate, who lives in the nearby upmarket neighbourhood of al-Taif, central Khartoum.

Lina has been politically active since she was 14, after climate-change-related floods wrought destruction across 14 of Sudan’s 18 states, affecting over 300,000 people and washing away 25,000 homes. The Bashir regime’s failure to act prompted Lina to join Nafeer, a youth-led initiative – named after a Sudanese social tradition translated as ‘collective voluntary work’ – to support those left destitute.

‘I grew up in a supportive and quite open-minded family,’ says Lina, ‘but there were limitations to this freedom. Once I stepped outside my home, I could get arrested for this type of thinking.’

Lina remembers being scared to meet with male classmates and being sent home from her first day at university for wearing jeans. Under Bashir’s public order laws police could punish perceived ‘offences to public morality’, arresting women on the street and at home. Women never knew when or how they could be targeted. Blackmail, beatings and sexual assault by police were common.

Since the laws were largely repealed in November 2019, five months after Bashir’s fall, Lina can now wear jeans wherever she likes. She also welcomes the transitional government’s move to

PUBLIC ORDER LAWS

Sudan’s ‘public order’ laws were the scourge of women’s lives under Bashir’s rule. The set of regulations stemmed from state-level ‘Public Order Acts’ that governed relationships between the sexes, and a national 1991 Criminal Code that banned ‘offence to public morality’, ‘gross indecency’ and non-familial gender mixing.

A woman could be arrested for wearing trousers, not wearing a headscarf or being in public with a man she wasn’t related to. The laws forbade working or socializing in a mixed-gender environment. Homes and workplaces were regularly raided.

The Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA) reports that the laws created ‘fear, apprehension and self-censorship’ which had the effect of limiting ‘women’s participation in public and social life’.

Following the revolution, the Public Order Acts were repealed in November 2019. But the public order articles of the 1991 Criminal Code remain.

outlaw female genital mutilation (FGM), a prevalent practice in Sudan where the United Nations (UN) estimates that nearly 9 out of 10 women have been subjected to the most extreme and invasive form of the procedure.

Lina points to a small green island in the middle of the Nile in Khartoum with a smile. ‘Tutti island is one of the only places in Sudan that is 100 per cent FGM free.’ She explains how mothers and grandmothers on the island went house to house educating families about the dangers of FGM. Lina knows it will take time before the rest of Sudan follows suit but looking across at Tutti island she feels hopeful.

Today, Lina is still a climate activist. She engages her Muslim-majority audience using Islamic arguments: ‘The Qur’an tells us to protect the environment.’ She’s worried about the growing number of sand storms and is working to expose the mishandling of climate funds by the former regime – still in disbelief that she can now do this safely.

SOMAIA AND A WHEEL OF PINS: THE STUDENT OF PEACE

Somaia Musa Adam Haran, 29, is sitting on a bus from Ombada 15, where she lives. ‘Arabi, Arabi, Arabi,’ the driver calls. Here at Souq al-Arabi, Somaia changes buses for Bahri University, Khartoum, where she is studying for a Masters in Peace and Development Studies.

Somaia is from the Darfur region in western Sudan. As a young girl, she pleaded relentlessly, and successfully, to go to school with her brothers. But at 16 years old, she was married to her cousin, later giving birth to a son. According to the Sudanese Family Law of 1991, a wife must ‘amicably obey’ her husband and seek his permission to work. Wife-beating is permitted, if accepted by the local community. ‘I had to cook and clean,’ Somaia remembers. ‘There was violence inside the home.’

At 19, she decided to brave the shame of divorce and secretly applied to study in Khartoum. ‘I knew it was a big decision. It would cause a fight inside my family.’ Life was a struggle for a woman alone in Khartoum. She was harassed and quizzed on her Darfuri ethnicity at job interviews. She also lost custody of her son. Looking at his photograph she worried she had made a mistake, but decided to ‘face my challenge and continue’.

Barring improved freedom of speech, Somaia has noticed little change since she protested in the revolution. The Family Laws that governed her marriage remain. And, unlike Lina, Somaia cannot get away with wearing jeans. ‘I get harassed even wearing suitable clothing... imagine if I decided to wear what I liked?’ she laughs, rolling her eyes. It doesn’t matter to her if the laws change when the mentality stays the same. She carries a wheel of pins in her handbag to dig into men who harass her on the bus.

For Somaia, women will never see real change until there is peace. She was 12 when war began in Darfur and

remembers vast refugee camps appearing on the outskirts of her city. According to the UN approximately two million people remain displaced by violence in Darfur.

‘With peace we can get social peace. With peace [women] can, step by step, get a good education and then participate in political life,’ she says.

At the time of writing, peace talks are ongoing with armed groups across Sudan, including in Darfur and the Nuba Mountains. Any settlement will need to rebalance distribution of power and resources and increase religious tolerance. Female civil-society leaders have been heavily involved, relaying community priorities to negotiators, but remain underrepresented in leadership. All three African Union mediators are men and only 15 per cent of the negotiation delegation are women.

SARA AND AN OLD FAMILY PHOTOGRAPH: THE POLITICIAN

Sara Abdalla Nugdallah sits at a literary award ceremony in the imposing Friendship Hall, a gift from China to the Sudanese government.

A former mathematics professor, she is the first female Secretary General of the political party Umma, one of the most widely supported in the country. Umma grew out of a Sufi nationalist movement led by a religious leader called the ‘Mahdi’, who established Sudan’s first independent Islamic state in the 19th century. His elderly great-grandson, Sadiq al-Mahdi, leads the party today.

Sara spent her childhood in Oum Durman, Khartoum, where during Sufi prayers – *dhikr* – sheikhs lead meditative repetitions of the names of God. Sufism is generally regarded as more peaceful and tolerant than Bashir’s brand of conservative Islam. ‘Luckily my father was one of the founders of the [Umma] party. I grew up among sisters and girls.’ She remembers discussing social issues and politics with family and neighbours.

Sara is looking forward to her first chance to run for office. All parties are keeping a watchful eye on the military, who still dominate the Sovereign Council. On March 2021, they are due to cede control to a civilian chair who will rule until democratic elections take place in 2022.

This will be the first opportunity for Sudan to democratically choose its leaders since al-Mahdi, leader of the Umma party, won elections in 1986. This was during Sudan’s second civil war, when his government was at war with Jalila’s SPLM-N rebels (then known as SPLM). Al-Mahdi was twice prime minister and attended an elite British school like many of Sudan’s other former leaders.

While Jalila and Lina want a secular state, Sara wants a religious, but tolerant, state that respects diversity. Against polygamy and child marriage, she rejects the former regime’s use of Islam to control women.

Ongoing debates over religion’s role in the state reflect a dilemma over national identity in a country of over 500 ethnic groups still dealing with the legacy of brutal civil wars. Democratic coalition governments in pre-Bashir Sudan have been weak, divided and unstable, often overturned by military coups.

In the last elections before Bashir took power in 1986, the Umma party had no female members of parliament. But over the last 30 years powerful women have risen to the top of Umma party politics – often women from quite powerful families, like Sara. Her priority is to bring more women into politics, especially those from marginalized areas.

Umma aims for 40 per cent of women in party leadership positions. But for Sara, representation and quotas need to be substantive, not symbolic. Bashir’s parliament had a 25-per-cent quota of Islamist female MPs, but they often couldn’t stop legislation that curtailed the rights of women, she explains.

‘Women have to have their voices heard.’

‘We finally felt really respected in this new society. The young people came to me and said, “Thank you, you are the mother of the revolution”’

HIKMA AND HER MOTORCYCLE: THE MECHANIC

It's evening in the sprawling open-air market of Souq al-Shabi where a sandy pavement is covered in motorcycles, tools, wheels and car parts.

Dressed in a loose shirt, fake-leather jacket, trousers and sandals, with a bandana tied around her shaved head, Hikma Gaidom Kodi, 42, answers to the name Abdul Hakam when at work.

Hikma is one of the few female

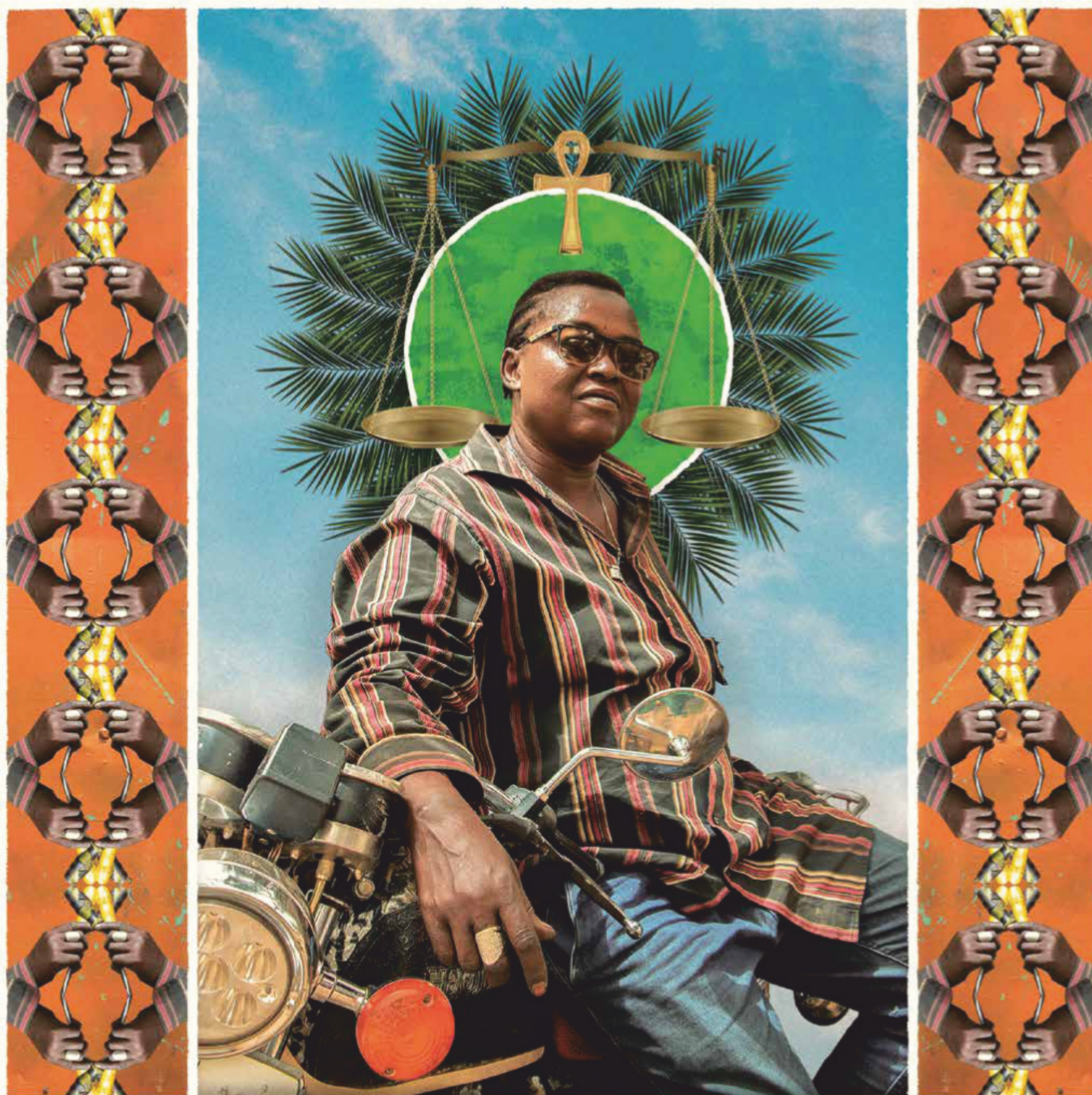
motorcycle mechanics in Khartoum. Under the 1997 Labour Code, work considered 'hazardous, arduous or harmful to their health [...] exceeding the normal limits borne by women' was discouraged. But Hikma has always found a way around the country's laws.

At 16, she started dressing as a man, while training to repair motorbikes. 'The person who taught me told me, "Don't tell anyone here that you are a lady". I changed my name. People didn't recognize me. I lived among people with that identity.' Hikma is tenacious. Determined

to help support her family, she completed the training in half the usual time.

'I've seen many girls in South Sudan and Uganda riding motorbikes. What I'm doing is not a big deal but around here it is.' Unlike Somaia, Hikma doesn't have to deal with 'the pinching, touching, grabbing' on public transport. Dressing as a man opened her eyes to the freedom that men experience. 'If you wear trousers, you are left alone.'

Hikma Gaidom Kodi



The transitional government has continued to make reforms. Religious laws on apostasy, male guardianship and flogging as punishment for homosexuality have been repealed

At the market, her colleagues now know she is a woman and accept her male name and men's clothes. 'I'm really happy here. I feel I can be me.'

The air smells smoky and full of gas. Hikma is the only woman here, apart from a tea lady, her customers' chairs haphazardly placed among broken motorbikes. Hikma recently broke her leg – but cannot afford to go to hospital. She stands soldering without gloves or protective equipment.

Hikma wants her own workshop but for now has to focus on survival. She earns no more than 2,000 Sudanese pounds (\$37) per week. Playfully, she talks about trying to arrange a meeting with the prime minister and even 'tried asking that warlord in charge if he could give me a small amount of gold', referring to RSF head 'Hemeti,' the vice-president of the Sovereign Council. She has not heard back.

Hikma took part in the revolution with others from the market. 'We wanted them to look at our issues but we were neglected. So, we got disappointed and just came back,' she says.

The repeal of public order laws makes no difference to her, as she has always broken the law in some way or other. She fixes bikes without a permit and if the police come, she picks up her stuff and runs. She jokes that she runs fastest, but then backtracks quickly. She often gets caught, arrested and fined.

AWADIA AND A CUP OF TEA: THE UNIONIST

In a nearby part of the market, Awadia Mahmoud Kuku adds a spoonful of sugar to a glass of tea. Women in colourful dress are busy around her taking phone calls and helping visitors. Attached to the corrugated roof, a rusted sign reads, 'Women Food and Tea Sellers' Co-operative'.

Awadia's union is always abuzz with activity, she explains.

Sudanese women consider labour unions to be the most important platform for increasing visibility and access to decision-making, according to a survey of 10,000 women.¹ Political parties ranked low in comparison, after civil society and resistance committees.

Awadia came from the Nuba Mountains to Khartoum when she was young. In 1985 she took part in a mass uprising to overthrow dictator Gaafar Nimeiry. Illiterate – like 56 per cent of Sudanese women – Awadia found herself excluded from many work opportunities. So she started working as a 'tea lady', selling tea and coffee on the street.

Under Bashir, tea ladies were relentlessly fined, arrested, blackmailed, and sexually assaulted by public-order police. According to advocacy network the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA), public-order police used violence against women considered 'security threats', including war refugees such as the tea ladies, women's rights campaigners or student activists. SIHA recorded one case in 2017 where police pelted tea ladies with stones as they fled across the Nile. One woman's six-month-old baby was thrown into the water and drowned, along with four women. 'You couldn't see any respect from the people in government... The ladies were not seen as humans,' Awadia says.

In 1990, Awadia established the first Women's Food and Tea Sellers' Co-operative in Khartoum. The group offered legal aid and confronted police authorities, often successfully, to help return confiscated equipment. Awadia, like Jalila, spent years behind bars for her activism.

When protests against Bashir began, Awadia was joyous. She proudly took charge of feeding protesters. 'We finally felt really respected in this new society. The young people came to me and said,

"Thank you, you are the mother of the revolution".'

COVID-19 POSTSCRIPT: MASKS AND HAND SANITIZERS

It's June 2020 and Awadia does not have much time to talk. She is on her way to court to bail out tea ladies arrested for violating lockdown rules.

Sudan is experiencing one of the worst outbreaks of Covid-19 in East Africa. The economy was already suffering and inflation now stands at 100 per cent.

Despite the pandemic, the transitional government has continued to make reforms. Religious laws on apostasy, male guardianship and flogging as punishment for homosexuality have been repealed. The death penalty has been lifted. An anti-corruption body has confiscated almost \$4 billion of assets from Bashir, his family and associates. Bashir himself is currently facing trial in Khartoum over his role in the 1989 coup that brought him to power. He is also wanted by the International Criminal Court, to face charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity for atrocities committed by pro-government forces in Darfur.

While people wait anxiously for the 2022 elections, they are pushing to constrain the power of the military in other areas. In July 2020, protests resulted in all military regional governors being replaced by 18 civilian governors, including – for the first time in Sudanese history – two women. However, reformers are frustrated. A promised 300-strong civilian Legislative Transitional Council that would have balanced the power of the military-dominated Sovereign Council has yet to materialize.

Islamists from the former regime 'are resisting the democratic situation' explains Samia al-Nagar from the women's civil-society coalition MANSAM.

‘They are creating problems every day. They are still in control of the economic situation and that is why now we have a very high inflation.’

Thousands have protested the repeal of Islamic legal restrictions, including many women. ‘We don’t like these new laws that seek to convert us into a Western community,’ a female protester told journalists. ‘We’re Sudanese and Muslim and we want to remain as we believe.’

For al-Nagar, deep-rooted patriarchal structures pose the biggest challenge to women’s rights. ‘Democratic governments won’t necessarily give women their rights; we have to be there to struggle.’ MANSAM has presented a list of women candidates for consideration to be nominated to the legislative transitional council.

Awadia’s union has been dissolved to clear out elements of the old regime placed in unions by Bashir’s party, leaving her suddenly without a platform.

Aisha Musa el-Said, one of the two female members of the Sovereign Council, recently summoned Awadia to tell her to stop giving press conferences

and speaking out on behalf of the tea ladies, now she is no longer a union leader.

Awadia feels discouraged. She had thought of Musa el-Said as an ally. ‘At first I wanted to be in the parliament or the legislative council, but when I saw how [Musa el-Said] treated me, I thought that I don’t want to be like her. I want to be in the street,’ she says. ‘I won’t stop fighting for the rights of women and I won’t stop believing in the revolution.’

Back in Burri, Malaz is struggling. The resistance committee in her neighbourhood is now in charge of helping distribute food, money and hand sanitizer to families struggling to get by due to Covid-19 – but women have been told to stay at home. The men will text meeting updates. Malaz complains about the brevity of these texts and believes the committee has started lying about meeting times: when she turns up as scheduled, the meeting is already over.

Malaz turns up regardless. ‘I insist on going. They underestimate what we say, but we are still going to push for our opinions and our voices to be heard. They matter.’ ●

LUCY PROVAN IS A JOURNALIST AND FILMMAKER. SHE IS A ONE WORLD MEDIA, IWMF AND ONES TO WATCH GRANTEE.

ALICE ROWSOME IS A BAFTA-NOMINATED DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER AND JOURNALIST, FOCUSING ON CLIMATE JUSTICE, FORCED MIGRATION AND WOMEN’S ISSUES.

Sources

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This reporting was supported by the International Women’s Media Foundation’s Women Deliver Reporting Grants.

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HALL OF INFAMY

IVÁN DUQUE MÁRQUEZ

JOB: *President of Colombia*

REPUTATION: *Conservative technocrat opposed to Colombian peace accord*

When Iván Duque swept to power in the summer of 2018 as the head of the rightist Democratic Centre Party, one of the main points of speculation from pundits was whether he was simply a frontman for his good friend, Colombian political boss and former president, Álvaro Uribe. He is certainly a younger, prettier face with educational credentials from Georgetown University and other US institutions (although exaggerating his connections with Harvard). He has written several books mostly lionizing market opportunities and has multilateral experience, mainly in the financial sector. But it was Uribe's sponsorship that put Duque on the political map.

Uribe is the founder and leader of

the Democratic Centrists, under whose banner Duque made his Presidential run. Uribe is perhaps Latin America's most famous rightwing populist, with long-suspected connections to the Medellín drug trade and the infamous Sinaloa Cartel and its paramilitaries. Uribe broke with his old Social Party of National Unity when his former protégé President Juan Manuel Santos started negotiations with the FARC guerrillas to end Colombia's bitter 50-year-long civil war. While Santos won the Nobel Prize for the 2017 peace deal finalized in Havana, it has remained a controversial issue in Colombian politics. In 2018 the entire Colombian political establishment (including Santos) came together in a joint effort to support Duque against the leftist former Bogotá mayor Gustavo Petro.

Duque, like Uribe, is an opponent of the Havana Accords on the grounds that they are too lenient on FARC militants. But unlike Uribe, who wants to revoke the deal, he was willing like most Colombians to accept it as a *fait accompli*. Instead, Duque's strategy was to not implement any of its provisions, such as promised rural development in poor communities and protecting former FARC combatants. Over 200 ex-FARC activists have been murdered since demobilization, in addition to more than 700 social leaders, organizers and human rights

defenders. Duque has either been unable or unwilling to put a stop to this carnage.

Duque is part of the swing back to the Right that has plagued many Latin American countries in recent years. In the case of Colombia, where there was never a Bolivarian pink tide for social justice, Duque has blamed the country's problems on neighbouring Venezuela and its besieged Chavista experiment as well as the fraught peace deal to propel his rise to power. The rest of his programme has been more or less boilerplate neoliberalism – austerity cuts affecting workers and pensioners, privatization giveaways to the corporate sector, ignoring environmental laws and indigenous rights. By November 2019 Colombians had had enough and hundreds of thousands hit the streets of Bogotá and other cities. Despite being largely peaceful, they were met with violent riot squads. Duque called not for negotiations but a vague 'national dialogue'. Then along came Covid-19. At the time of writing, Colombia had suffered over 300,000 cases of the virus. Yet Duque has seen an uptick in support as even the minimalist aid he has provided in the face of a pandemic has been welcomed by a desperate population. However, the long-term chances of this popularity lasting seem pretty remote given Duque's commitment to the structures of inequality and the ruthless methods of his mentor Álvaro Uribe. ●



ENRIQUE SHORE/ALAMY

LOW CUNNING: *Duque talks a good line when speaking from international pulpits whether on human rights, fighting the drug trade or climate change. But, as they say, 'fine words butter no parsnips'. Despite the UNDP identifying Colombia as 'at high risk from climate change impacts', Duque's government has lifted restrictions on oil and mining companies, encouraging fracking and endangering previously protected natural reserves.*

SENSE OF HUMOUR: *Colombian cartoonist Matador portrayed Duque as a pig during the election with the caption, 'Oh no, I'm the only Uribista who is not a pig'. Neither Duque nor Uribe supporters were amused – threats varied from legal action to death. A chastened Matador withdrew the cartoon. While Duque needs Uribe's support he strives to stay clear of his mentor's sordid reputation.*

Sources: *Il Manifesto*; *The New York Times*; Colombia Reports; openDemocracy; Global Americans; *Financial Times*; *The New Republic*; Agence France Press; Americas Society

VIEW FROM INDIA

Why Indian outrage over Black Lives Matter rings hollow

In 2017, when a 19-year-old went missing from home in Greater Noida, a suburb of the Indian capital, locals raided the house of five Nigerian students living a few doors away, accusing them of being cannibals who had eaten the youth. Later the youngster returned in a state of severe intoxication – according to media reports at the time – and, a day later, died in a hospital, allegedly from a drug overdose. His father instigated the police to arrest the Nigerian students and slap murder charges on them for supplying drugs to the boy, charges which proved baseless.

Following the detention of the Nigerians, other African students gathered to protest outside the police station. Their slogans of ‘Black Lives Matter’ and ‘Skin tone is not a crime’ didn’t lead to hashtag wars in the country.

This is not surprising; racism is so deeply embedded in our daily lives that it doesn’t even register as being offensive. Calling a black person ‘kallu’ (a derogatory term derived from *kālā*, the Hindi word for black) or someone from northeastern India ‘chinky’ is considered harmless. Bollywood perpetuates racist stereotypes, with black people usually portrayed as mercenaries or drug lords. And while many Bollywood celebrities have jumped on the bandwagon to

condemn police brutalities against black people in the US, they have not protested against these stereotypes in their own backyard. Or similar hate crimes against their fellow citizens.

Not many now remember a young man called Nido Taniam from north-eastern India, who was killed in New Delhi in 2014 because of his East Asian features. He had stopped at a shop to ask for directions when the shopkeeper and a few other men began to taunt him with racial slurs. According to his friends, the men beat Nido with iron rods and sticks and made fun of his dyed blond hair.

His death highlighted the racism people from the northeast have constantly faced in other Indian regions, coming as they do from a less hide-bound social and cultural milieu. The Delhi police’s crisis helpline for people from the northeast received over 1,000 calls in 2018. When the Covid-19 pandemic erupted, hate spiked. People from the northeast were spat on, thrown out of their homes, detained and forced to quarantine themselves just because they ‘looked Chinese’.

Racism in India is intertwined with hatred of the ‘other’ and the ‘outsider’. It has been harnessed as an electoral strategy and mainstreamed by the ruling

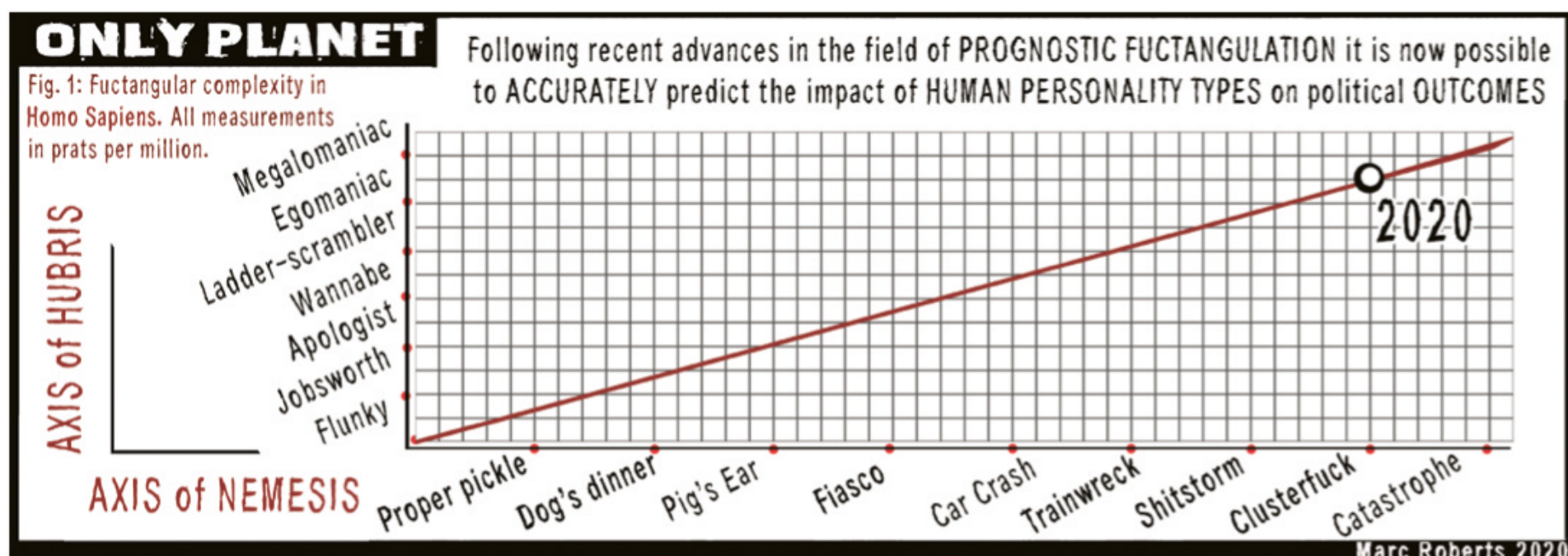
rightwing Bharatiya Janata Party, led by Hindutva poster boy Narendra Modi. Hate crimes have rocketed and, according to Amnesty International’s Halt the Hate website, between January and June 2019, over two-thirds of victims were dalits (so-called ‘lower caste’ Hindus) or religious minorities like Muslims and Christians. Dalits were attacked over basic rights such as access to roads, water, crematoria and schools. Muslims and dalits were lynched by vigilantes who suspected them of killing cows, considered sacred in India.

Hate – racism is just one of its components – is India’s new religion. But many who now publicly voice outrage over black lives in the US have stayed resolutely silent about state-sponsored brutalities inflicted on Muslims and dalits. What will it take to prevent us from looking away when Africans in India say ‘Black Lives Matter’, or when a Muslim or dalit man gasps, ‘I can’t breathe’? ●

NILANJANA BHOWMICK IS A MULTI-AWARD WINNING JOURNALIST BASED IN NEW DELHI. SHE TWEETS @NILANJANAB



ILLUSTRATION: KATE COPELAND



SPOTLIGHT

MAYSOON ZAYID

‘What motivates me? Money, of course! Being disabled in Trump’s America is expensive. Growing up with cerebral palsy (CP) my father taught me how to walk by putting my little feet on top of his while he walked. He taught me to dance by dangling a dollar bill in front of me – my “inner stripper” was strong, even then!’

I had seen Maysoon Zayid’s seminal TED talk some years before we met and was particularly struck by the audience’s (initially nervous) reaction to her story. I can only describe it as painfully funny.

‘My best jokes come from moments that have angered me the most in my life. I reflect and learn if I get “called out” by hecklers. However, if I’ve caused offence by questioning your politics, I don’t mind hurting your feelings and I’ll do it again.’

The global coronavirus pandemic continues to hit BAME and disabled communities particularly badly. As the world braces for a second wave, Maysoon feels that President Trump’s mishandling of the virus and lack of care for the poorest in society are to blame for America’s huge and rising death toll.

‘Poverty and disability go hand in hand in the US. Disabled Americans have spent decades fighting against being institutionalized. We want to be empowered to live in our own homes and communities. A quarter of all of the people who have already died from Covid-19 in America were in nursing homes. The disabled population, often forced to live in assisted living, were largely ignored. We also had to endure dehumanizing conversations about whether we deserved a ventilator or whether they should go to non-disabled

patients as a priority. Trump has a long history of discriminating against disabled people. With him at the helm, the US government has made it their mission to make the lives of disabled Americans hell. Betsy DeVos, the Secretary of Education, rolled back 72 protections for disabled students. The current administration is in court right now trying to strip protections from people with pre-existing conditions. There’s only one way out of this mess: register to vote for Joe Biden.’

Maysoon was instrumental in founding the festival Arabs Gone Wild in 2003, a spin-off of the New York Arab American Comedy Festival – a well-respected platform – that has given rise to big-name comedians such as Ramy Youssef. The festival was a reaction to the lack of opportunity for Arab performers, including Maysoon.

‘Since the age of five, my dream in life was to be on the daytime soap opera *General Hospital*. Throughout my comedy career, anytime I was interviewed I made sure to mention *General Hospital*, and finally, my dream came true! Now, I play Zahra Amir – a shark of a lawyer. There is no mention of Zahra’s disability. She is disabled because I have CP. Zahra is groundbreaking because she is the one character in soap history that love cannot heal.’

This interview took place in the wake of global demonstrations following the killing of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police. I ask Maysoon how she feels about the way her country is policed.

‘I am disgusted. Almost half of all Americans killed by law enforcement are disabled and they are disproportionately

people of colour. This country was built on slavery. It is time to end the confederacy once and for all. I hope Donald Trump is the last roar of the KKK and that this country can finally have liberty and justice for all. Black Lives Matter resonates deeply with me because I have always been a fighter for equality. I grew up spending my summers watching Palestinians being oppressed. I am amazed that Palestine, which is pretty much in a permanent state of chaos, managed Covid-19 better than America. It shut down, tested, and then isolated the few cases. It closed mosques and churches and didn’t let extremists force them to reopen before time. As a Palestinian, watching BLM protesters getting gassed and shot by rubber bullets in Washington DC, I can’t help thinking no-one ever believed Palestinians when we said the forces were attacking protesters. Now, maybe we can fight for equality for all people, from Jerusalem to New Jersey.’

Our interview is coming to a close. Maysoon tells me she is an avid reader of *New Internationalist*. Her message to youthful readers: ‘Please get involved in your college’s politics. Learn about the past so you can better understand the present political climate. Don’t be afraid to be a leader. Don’t let anyone tell you that equality, justice and ending violence is impossible. Believe you can change the world and find others who are working for that change. There is power in numbers, but never be afraid to be the first person to do the right thing. It only takes a tiny flame to light up the dark. Be that flame.’ ●

You can see Maysoon Zayid here: nln.tl/acting-disability. And here: nln.tl/limiting-beliefs

‘My best jokes come from moments that have angered me the most in my life... if I’ve caused offence by questioning your politics, I don’t mind hurting your feelings and I’ll do it again’



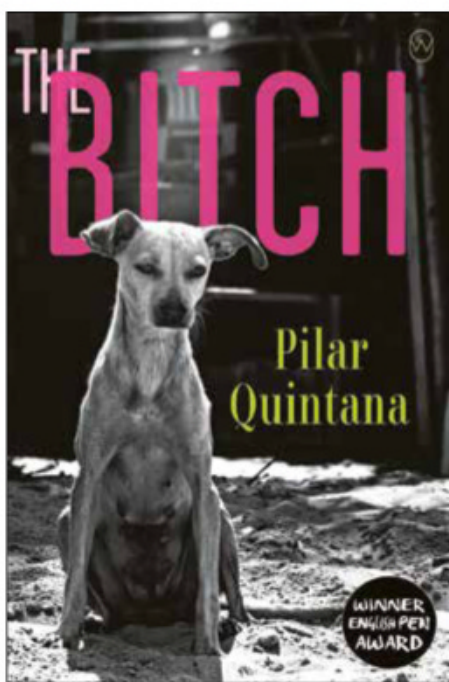
BOOKS

The Bitch

by Pilar Quintana, translated by Lisa Dillman
(World Editions, ISBN 9781912987054)

worldeditions.org

★★★★☆



Despite its brevity and a deceptively simple plot, Pilar Quintana's novella manages to tackle, with the lightest of touches, a striking range of profound themes, from poverty and class inequality to loneliness, loss and repentance.

The book tells the story of Damaris, living hand to mouth on Colombia's Pacific coast with her fisher husband, Rogelio. They supplement their income as caretakers for an adjacent house, property of an affluent family who have moved to the city. Approaching middle age and childless, Damaris and Rogelio squander their scant resources on increasingly desperate fertility treatments, to no avail. Damaris pours her maternal feelings into the care

of her pet, a female puppy she names Chirli, a name she had earmarked for the daughter she never had.

As she grows, Chirli proves a disruptive influence on the household, constantly running away into the dense jungle that surrounds the town and, to Damaris's anguish, repeatedly becoming pregnant. Her initial unconditional love of the dog and her nurturing instincts gradually give way to a simmering loathing as Chirli gives birth to litter after litter of puppies, and the book moves inexorably towards an inevitable yet shocking act of violence.

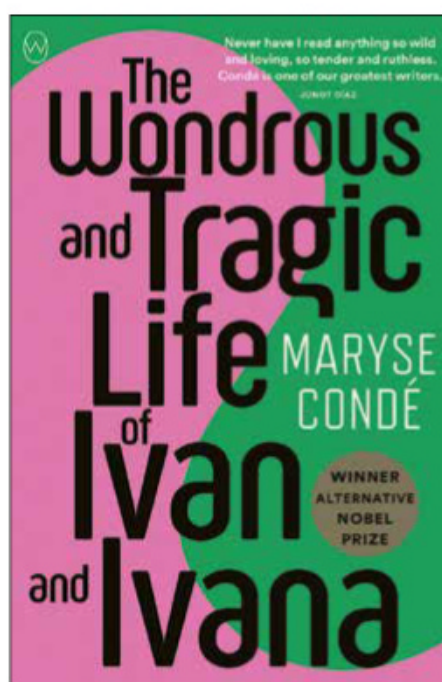
This is a wonderfully nuanced meditation on family ties and society's demands and the central relationship between Damaris and Rogelio is both touchingly tender and grittily believable. **The Bitch** is the first of Pilar Quintana's books to be translated into English and it speaks of an author of undoubted talent and rich promise. **PW**

The Wondrous and Tragic Life of Ivan and Ivana

by Maryse Condé, translated by Richard Philcox
(World Editions, ISBN 9781642860696)

worldeditions.org

★★★★☆



to become a police officer. The tragic dénouement is scarcely a surprise – the twins' fate had been predicted from their birth by their grandmother, who dreamt of them 'lying in a pool of blood'.

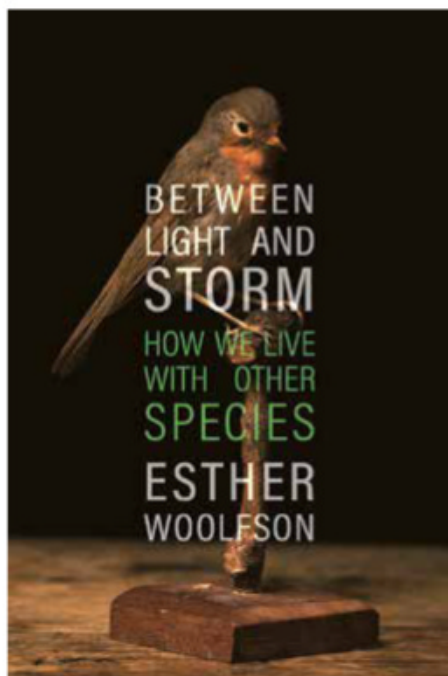
Unsettling questions are raised by **The Wondrous and Tragic Life of Ivan and Ivana**: how much is the twins' fate determined by their own misinterpretation and manipulation of their emotions? Can they be considered guilty if by suppressing a love deemed unacceptable by society they seek solace or distraction in other damaging ways? And with poverty, religion, colonialism and racism all having a role to play in their lives, to what extent are external influences the real driver of their destiny?

With a deft hand and wry wit, the unnamed narrator keeps the story moving but refrains from interpreting the events. So it is left up to the reader to draw their own conclusions and find their own answers, if they can. **JL**

Born to a black single mother in Guadeloupe, twins Ivan and Ivana learn early in life that the odds are stacked against them; indeed, the title of this latest novel by Maryse Condé (dubbed the *grande dame* of Caribbean literature) lets the reader know upfront that things are not going to end well. As they grow up, the twins seek refuge in each other from daily struggles and outside interference in their lives – yet the love they share builds to a passion that they struggle to control or understand. They travel together to Mali to meet their absent father, and then on to Paris, where they take very different paths, with Ivan becoming radicalized and Ivana training

Between Light and Storm

by Esther Woolfson
(Granta, ISBN 97811783782796)
granta.com
★★★★☆



Humans have been pondering our interaction with our co-inhabitants of Earth as long as we have been on the planet. Cave drawings and carvings depicting predators and prey species such as tigers, lions, deer and boar stretch back many thousands of years.

Esther Woolfson begins her study of 'how we live with other species' by contemplating the motivations and meanings of these cave drawings. She broadens her argument out to a consideration of our representation of birds and animals throughout human history in carvings, ceramics and paintings. In subsequent chapters she concerns herself with subjects as diverse as the existence of

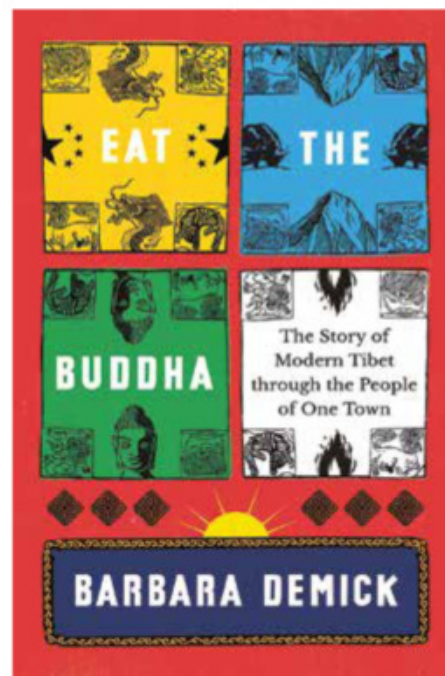
the soul in humans and other creatures; animal sacrifice and the consumption of meat; vivisection and animal experimentation; and the questionable justifications advanced in defence of the fur trade. Covid-19 and viral spillover get a mention, too.

This is nature writing in the foraging and fossicking mode, reminiscent of Kathleen Jamie and Barry Lopez. Woolfson ranges widely across disciplines and through time; discursive, informative and always ready to explore a promising byway. She draws on a dizzying array of sources, from Aristotle to John Berger, Descartes to Rebecca Solnit. Her dense prose is packed with allusions to literature, geology and history, both ancient and modern, the personal and the political; touching, time and again, on the consequences for the natural world of human actions.

Between Light and Storm is a fascinating and enlightening tour through our troubled and troubling relationship with animals and a sustained challenge to the notion that humans are not only different from other species but superior. **PW**

Eat the Buddha

by Barbara Demick
(Granta, ISBN 9781783785704)
granta.com
★★★★★



about another highly secretive place, North Korea. She made several visits to Ngaba, more or less undercover. **Eat the Buddha: The Story of Modern Tibet Through the People of One Town** is the product of careful on-the-ground journalism, interviews with Tibetans in exile, and newly discovered historical material stretching back 90 years.

And it's extraordinarily good. A superb storyteller, Demick melds the personal, the historical and the political seamlessly as she delves into the town's intriguing living legacy of rebellion. The people whose stories she tells – ranging from a former Tibetan princess to the illegitimate son of a disabled single mother – leap from the pages, full of life.

Today, Chinese oppression is somewhat less brutal than in the past, but propaganda and surveillance by the 'perfect dictatorship' is intense. The Tibetans have it less bad than the Uighurs, writes Demick, but their now downscaled demands for equality and cultural and religious freedom still seem too much to ask of the superpower. **VB**

Ngaba was 'a nothing little town that had just gotten its first set of traffic lights' when it shot to fame as the world capital of self-immolations. To date, of the 156 Tibetans who have set fire to themselves to protest against Chinese oppression, one third are from Ngaba. 'I did it for the sake of all Tibetans and sentient beings,' was the poignant note left by the 21st, a young monk, in 2012.

Unsurprisingly, the Chinese authorities don't want foreign journalists visiting the town, located on the eastern edge of the Tibetan plateau, where a large Chinese garrison keeps watch. Which was a red rag to Barbara Demick, prize-winning author of *Nothing to Envy*,

FILM



Eternal Beauty

written and directed by Craig Roberts

95 minutes

★★★★☆

Jane is small – too small for her clothes – and lives in a flat on a council estate. She takes tablets for paranoid schizophrenia, provoked by her distress and humiliation when her groom, Johnny, failed to show at their wedding. She doesn't work, doesn't have a social life at all, but does see her family. A sister, with her husband and 10-year-old son, lives nearby, in an anonymous modern semi. And in walking distance is her childhood home, with a well-tended front garden and hardline aspirational mum, dad, tough younger sister and near-mute teenage niece.

This may sound grim and Roberts' second feature is unflinching, but it's also funny, and though often threatens disaster, somehow pulls through. Sally Hawkins, almost always on screen, magnificently gets Jane – her foggiess, naivety and confusion,

and her winning acuteness and generosity.

Johnny haunts Jane. Whenever a phone rings she believes it's him and they talk and he expresses undying love. She hasn't got over him, but she still has a sparkiness and she's no pushover.

She manages fine, until, in the waiting room at her doctor's, she meets a confident, ageing, would-be-rock-star who is not slow to tell her how much he's in love with her.

This is not a drama about schizophrenia but about someone with schizophrenia. It's beautifully pitched, with great music and visuals and spot-on acting. The nasty sister and the dad who says almost nothing are delights. **ML**



Les Misérables

directed and co-written by Ladj Ly

102 minutes

★★★★☆

Excited youths head for public screenings of the 2018 football World Cup final. Mass street celebrations follow. Everyone, black and white, sings the *Marseillaise*, identifies with the team and with France: *liberté, égalité, fraternité*.

Director Ly then takes us back with the youths to Les Bosquets in Montfermeil, where Victor Hugo had set his novel, *Les Misérables*. Carefully he introduces the elements that lead, as in the novel, to a violent uprising.

We follow a police car, patrolling the streets with its brazen senior officer, black sidekick, and the classic rookie on his first day. We log the officers' attitudes and their relationship with the locals, almost all of African descent. There's the physically imposing 'mayor' who runs the street market. There's the quiet man running a fried chicken shop who converted to Islam in

prison. There are tough young women and suffering hard-working mothers, although we see too little of them.

It's fraught and fast and becomes frantic when a youth steals a lion cub from a travelling Romany circus and its boss threatens violence if he doesn't get it back. He does. But there's a cost – a police stun gun is fired in a boy's face.

Ly's debut is tense and gripping, superbly shot, eye-opening and frightening, and reveals deep social division, political neglect and racism. It brilliantly conveys the character and attitudes of the police officers at the sharp end. We don't get to know anyone else as well as them, though. **ML**

MUSIC

Reviews editor: Vanessa Baird
Words: Louise Gray and Malcolm Lewis



A Guide to the Birdsong of Mexico, Central America & the Caribbean

by Various Artists
(Shika Shika LP + digital)
nin.tl/shikashika
★★★★☆

Birdsong, Central America and the Caribbean, electronic music? What's not to love? Compiled by former Greenpeace activist and music producer Robin Perkins (aka El Búho or 'the owl'), **A Guide...** is two things simultaneously: a collection of 10, chilled-out electronica tracks that take local birdsong as their inspiration, and a timely alarm on ecological diversity. Human activity is now placing more than 25,000 animal species in danger of extinction. This record is a passionate attempt to call listeners to action: all the birds featured on the album – from the Jamaican blackbird to the Central American yellow-headed amazon parrot – are on this endangered list.

Accompanied by vivaciously coloured posters created by artist Scott Partridge (so aptly named), **A Guide...** picks up from a myriad of examples of composers to incorporate

birdsong into music. Perkins' album – a crowdfunded project that began five years ago with a counterpart devoted to South America – follows in this tradition, and, importantly, local musicians are an integral part of this album. Belize's Garifuna Collective's 'Black Catbird', a beguiling instrumental with drips of percussion led by a soaring birdsong, is a highlight of this lovely album, as is DJ Jiony's 'Cotorra Serrana Occidental', a short instrumental dedicated to Mexico's thick-billed parrot. In terms of newcomers, Di Laif's 'Colín Ocelado' is a spirited homage to the quails of Guatemala. All in all, there's plenty to tweet about in this handsomely produced album. **LG**



Global Control/Invisible Invasion

by AMMAR 808
(Glitterbeat Records, LP, CD + digital)
glitterbeat.com
★★★★☆

It's been two years since the rumbling basslines of Sofyann Ben Youssef's *Maghreb United* thundered across the dance-floors of Europe, their sheer heft anchoring the melodic topline that floated above them. Now based in Brussels, the Tunisian musician has turned to India for inspiration and **Global Control / Invisible Invasion**, made with Chennai musicians, is the compelling result.

Global Control, musically, is a fusion between Ben Youssef's analogue electronics, Tamil-language vocals, and instruments of the Asian subcontinent: the twangs of the *veena*, woodwind, such as flute and *nadaswaram*, and percussion in the shape of *kanjira* and *mridangam*. India and its ancient musical traditions have long provided travelling Western musicians with rich ways of reformulating their own approaches to

composition and sound. In this, Ben Youssef is no different, but the important thing is that **Global Control** is not, mercifully, another example of cultural appropriation. A musician with a long immersion in Indian musical traditions (as a younger man he studied the sitar and tabla in Delhi), Ben Youssef has conceived this project as one that uses old technologies to imagine future scenarios. This is a strategy familiar to musical sci-fi and **Global Control** offers a delirious journey through the epic Sanskrit stories of the *Mahabharata*. The amazing 'Arisothari Yen Devi', featuring vocalist Kali Dass, is a piece of trance that could have come out of classic acid house, while Susha's sweet vocals on 'Geeta Duniki', a song that describes a young girl dancing, has a lightness of being that makes the heart sing. **LG**

The crossword prize is a voucher for our online shop to the equivalent of £20/\$30. Only the winner will be notified. Send your entries by 30 September to: New Internationalist Puzzle Page, The Old Music Hall, 106-108 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JE, UK; or email a scan to: puzzlepage@newint.org Winner for 245: Alan Oakley, Nottingham, England.

CROSSWORD 246 by Axe

CRYPTIC ACROSS

- 7 Joseph's place is found in damaged Tehran A-Z (8)
9 Where on the Nile, over in Sudan, Ramadan is held (6)
10 Breeding ground in E Anglia for gangsters' molls? (6)
11 French department in Virginia is following California's operating system (8)

- 12 With plunge in banks of lei, bloke promoted capital from Europe (8)
13 Chinese city's curt response to the imperial family (6)
14 Suspicious residual links between Japan and Russia? (6,7)
17 Commonwealth country's about to cut revolutionary railway link to Siberian gulf (6)
19 Call hunk to dismantle place near Nottingham (8)
22 Japanese city take its home brew eventually to Kappa Alpha initiates around the Perth area (8)

- 23 Negotiating a fair first ballot started civil war here (6)
24 Is Guangzhou's legacy heavily based on tin?... (6)
25 ...and is Isle of Wight resort lacking the grand front of one in Norfolk? (8)

CRYPTIC DOWN

- 1 Pan author for being somewhere in Ontario (6)
2 Frenchman also called elite corps to bring up artillery to get past Indonesian metropolis (8)
3 Kiwi town besieged by Colonel's onrush (6)
4 London area shopping centre's under a cloud (4,4)
5 Woman, Australian, covers up getting to Brazilian port (6)
6 Poached and beheaded scaly mammals one traded with a group of Africans (8)
8 Place where war wantonly hit my iconic hotels first and again during its course (2,3,4,4)
14 Afghan city is between a rock and a hard place (8)
15 It's not dry stuff learning about an old French region (8)
16 Warwickshire town where not one's bolted down, it's murmured (8)
18 Pinnacle of the Caribbean's painting is viewed in fitting surroundings (6)
20 British in the French court are superior to German head of dynasty (6)
21 Myths put forward for 'Holy House' here near Ancona (6)

- 17 Gulf in Siberia, part of the Bering Sea (6)
19 Industrial town of Nottinghamshire, the burial place of Lord Byron (8)
22 Japanese industrial and engineering city synonymous with motor cycles (8)
23 Ibo homeland fleetingly independent from Nigeria in the 1960s (6)
24 Ohio city, home to WH Hoover of vacuum cleaner fame; President McKinley's burial place (6)
25 Great -----, leading English North Sea resort (8)

QUICK DOWN

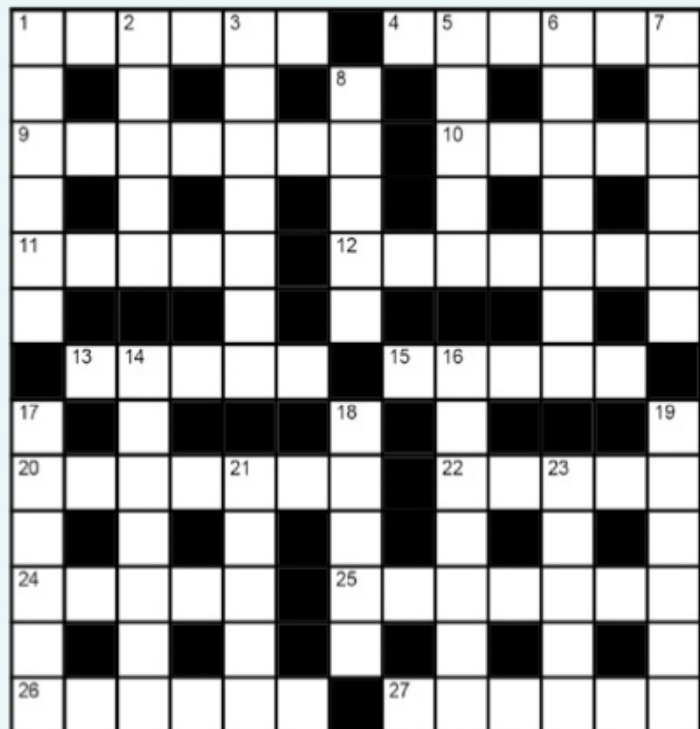
- 1 City north of Toronto, unofficial gateway to Ontario's holiday home country (6)
2 ----- Strait, water separating the islands of Borneo and Sulawesi (either spelling) (8)
3 ----- Marlborough, administrative region of New Zealand/Aotearoa (6)
4 London street named after a sport played there in the 17th century (4,4)
5 Brazilian river port of the Amazon, 1600 km inland (6)
6 Citizens of a former Portuguese colony in Africa (8)
8 City formerly known as Saigon (2,3,4,4)
14 Afghanistan city, an important trading centre (8)
15 Much fought-over region of NE France (8)
16 Warwickshire industrial town, off Watling St, 3 km SW of the Leicestershire border (8)
18 Pico -----, tallest peak of the Dominican Rep and the highest in the Caribbean (6)
20 Saxe----- and Gotha, British dynasty renamed Windsor in 1917 (6)
21 Town in Adriatic Italy, said to be the site of the 'Holy House' brought from 7 by angels in 1295 (6)

SOLUTION TO CROSSWORD 245

ACROSS: 8 Pago Pago, 9 Actium, 10 Maraca, 11 Amirante, 12 Malaysia, 13 Alania, 14 Christmas Island, 18 Malaga, 20 Angerman, 23 Peterlee, 24 Aragon, 25 Albion, 26 Cotentin.
DOWN: 1 Galata, 2 Godavari, 3 Bajans, 4 Copacabana Beach, 5 Panihati, 6 Ottawa, 7 Austrian, 15 Heavenly, 16 Thailand, 17 Lorraine, 19 Adelie, 21 Granta, 22 Aeolis.

ASSOCIATION WORDS 13

Solutions here are alluded to by 'association' words or phrases, eg ICE as a solution could have association words like 'melting (ICE)' or '(ICE) skating', so the association words in each clue could appear in a phrase before or after the solution word.



ACROSS

- 1 Spit and; Corridor (6)
4 Rocky; Heights (6)
9 Divide and; The world (7)
10 Thumb; Up (5)
11 Passage to; Pale ale (5)
12 In an; Coffee (7)
13 Puff; ...'s tongue (5)
15 Red; Munchhausen (5)
20 Over the: Nation (7)
22 Mulholland: My car (5)
24 Not for all the tea in: Dresden (5)
25 Roy: Lake and Palmer (7)
26 Counter; Sealed and delivered (6)
27 Royal: To Marry (6)

DOWN

- 1 Teddy Bears'; At Hanging Rock (6)
2 Fur; Up for inspection (5)
3 Garlic; Roll (7)
5 Road; Mountains (5)
6 Water; New York (7)
7 Fixed; And liabilities (6)
8 Bird; Storm (5)
14 Back-seat; Range (7)
16 Forwarding; A letter (7)
17 Airs and: The room with her presence (6)
18 Sweets for my: Caroline (5)
19 Salted: Butter (6)
21 Switch; Runner (5)
23 Force the: Price (5)

SOLUTION TO ASSOCIATION WORDS 12

ACROSS: 1 Bread, 4 Houston, 8 Weekend, 9 Sprat, 10 Edna, 11 Columbia, 14 Barber, 15 Fiscal, 18 Feathers, 20 Ibis, 23 Awake, 25 Vietnam, 26 Orleans, 27 Latin.
DOWN: 1 Bowie, 2 Eleanor, 3 Deed, 4 Hudson, 5 Ups, 6 Throb, 7 Netball, 12 Unit, 13 Mesh, 14 Buffalo, 16 Cabinet, 17 Braves, 19 Avail, 21 Simon, 22 Bell, 24 Eva.

WORDSEARCH 92

Find the 24 capital cities with five letters hidden here.



SOLUTION TO WORDSEARCH 91

The 20 terms related to climate change were: Albedo, Arctic, Biomass, Carbon, Clouds, Coal, Drought, Feedback, Forest, Glacier, Ice Shelf, Icecap, IPCC, Melting, Ocean, Oil, Ozone, Sun, Trees, Water.

Ethical and political dilemmas abound these days. Seems like we're all in need of a New Internationalist perspective. Enter stage: Agony Uncle.

Q: Shops have recently begun to reopen in my town and the first day saw hundreds of people queueing from the early hours for fast-fashion bargains. The fashion industry is responsible for 10 per cent of humanity's carbon emission output but, amid the devastation brought on by the pandemic, the impending ecological collapse is falling off the agenda. Consumerism is still eroding our planet and exploiting workers in the Global South, but we've become collectively desensitized to it. Having said this, I'm torn over how to advocate against consumerism. News about cancelled retail orders, due to the Covid-19-related slump in sales, suggests that buying Primark could save jobs in Bangladesh. And when families still have growing children to clothe during a recession, how can I continue to campaign on this without sounding so out of touch?
Concerned eco-socialist

A: Your dilemma contains multitudes. There is the moral disapprobation directed at consumers in the Global North who blithely buy fast-fashion commodities which are cheap precisely because the lives of the people who made them are too. There is the immense supply-chain that spans continents, accelerated by technological developments like containerization. And there are the political decisions of those who built

this iniquitous global division of labour, from the Europeans who de-industrialized South Asia under colonialism to the neoliberals who told them the best cure for poverty was to let foreign capital in.

If I knew how to solve this, I wouldn't be a mere freelance Agony Uncle. But perhaps I can help clarify a few things. First, as you've recognized, moral outrage isn't very useful. For example, in Britain, 16 million people have less than £100¹ (\$125) in savings. If people need to buy super-cheap clothes, we mustn't wag the finger at them for doing so.

There's often misogyny at play here. In Britain it seemed to be mainly images of women (and young black and minority ethnic people) that were plastered over the newspapers, queuing for shops on the day those Covid-19 restrictions ended, as if they were morally deficient for doing what was allowed and even encouraged. Hundreds of years ago it was also women who were condemned by liberal moralists for buying luxuries like tea and fine china from exploited colonies. Yes, people are playing a role in an awful system, but what is behind this type of shaming?

As for the economics, it's fair to admit that the globalized system which underwrites your dilemma is pretty unassailable. Embarrassing the fashion industry might only really lead to two outcomes: the emergence of a boutique

industry of 'ethical consumerist' clothing, allowing a small demographic with more disposable income to feel better about itself, or fashion giants engaging in cosmetic changes ('recycled clothing!'), which provide the illusion of change. This brings us to politics.

Politics, at its root, is about who counts as human. Who we recognize as legitimate agents endowed with the capacity to change the world. So the question we should be asking ourselves is: how can we act in solidarity with garment workers? How can we support trade unions in Bangladesh, many of which were created in the wake of the Rana Plaza disaster but have been chilled by anti-union intimidation? How can we support workers in Vietnam who produce garments for markets like Russia and Turkey, where the scrutiny of working conditions is

even more paltry than those exporting for Western brands?

In Britain, Labour Behind The Label are all about empowering garment workers. There's also the Asia Floor Wage Alliance which is building regional networks of garment workers and the US-based International Labor Rights Forum who've done work on cotton production in Uzbekistan and apparel workers' rights in Bangladesh. In other words, let's direct our attention to those usually rendered invisible or as victims at the bottom of the supply chain, and let their actions set the terms for a better consumerist order. ●

¹ Brian Milligan, 'Millions have less than £100 in savings, study finds', BBC, 26 September 2016, nln.tl/UKSavings

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LANDLORDS WERE ABOLISHED?

Amy Hall makes the case for people-powered housing.

25 March. It's the date that this year, based on my income and rent costs, I stopped working for my landlord and started working for myself – my 'freedom from rent day'. I earn an average UK salary, live in a house-share and enjoy below market-rate rent for my city. For many of my friends and neighbours it will be June at least before their earnings are their own.

That people with more capital can build wealth off the back of the basic needs of those with less is one of the key features of most of the world's economies and shelter is no exception. But is there a way we could do away with landlords?

Being a landlord can seem like the perfect business opportunity, providing supplementary income or an alternative pension for anyone who is able to buy a house that they don't need to live in. Landlords, whether they are big private equity firms or individuals, can charge for the use of their asset and hold onto it until it increases in value or the mortgage has been paid off – thanks to the rent paid by the tenants. Globally, residential real estate makes up \$163 trillion of assets – more than twice the world's total GDP.

On a month-by-month basis it is often more expensive to rent than pay a mortgage. But, if you're not able to save for a deposit, buying is not an option. Instead, you end up further from that goal as you hand over more money to your landlord. Mortgage holders in England spend, on average, 18 per cent of their household income on their mortgage, whereas renters hand over one third of their income in rent – rising to 40 per cent in London. In 2016, one third of US households paid more than 30 per cent of their income on housing; for tenants living alone, that percentage was 47 per cent.

Legal protections vary from country to country but renters are vulnerable to

eviction. They can also be pushed out of neighbourhoods because they can no longer afford to live there. If you buy a house in an area that becomes more 'desirable' you can make money on your

for those landlords who sit on extra housing as 'something for the kids'.

Lavin argues that a post-Covid-19 global recession should be used as an opportunity to transfer housing out of private ownership and that limited pay-offs could be offered to owners, 'compensating profiteers in order to break free from their control.'

A radical programme to transfer land and housing into community or state ownership, to be managed at low rents, would provide for people who cannot afford, or don't want, to own their own home. Much more housing could be run by democratically elected local governments, with financial support from central government.

Another option, which could run alongside a boost to state housing stocks, is more community ownership and control, with housing owned collectively through an entity such as a community land trust or co-operative. This could involve no individual private ownership and direct democracy from residents.

There would need to be a supportive regulatory environment, but a boost in housing co-operative numbers *could* be a useful tool against gentrification, with rents kept low and organizations accessible to local people. Research has shown high rates of resident satisfaction in co-operatives across the world.

The right to secure housing is recognized under international human rights law but it is far from universally recognized. With political will, we could make that overdue shift away from treating housing as an individualized commodity, and make it instead something that everyone can access and no-one can hoard. ●



investment; if you're renting, it becomes harder to stay.

Legislating against people owning more than one home, or homes that they don't live in, could be a first step in getting rid of landlords. Surplus housing could then be transferred to tenants, if they want it. As Tom Lavin, from the UK's Greater Manchester Housing Action, writes: 'It does not seem unreasonable to suggest, as a basic point of fairness, that ownership of the assets are transferred to the ones doing the actual paying in exchange.'

Limitations could be put on how long people could 'own houses'. This could help tackle the inequality that is passed down from generation to generation, partly fuelled by property wealth and inheritance, and reduce the motivation

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